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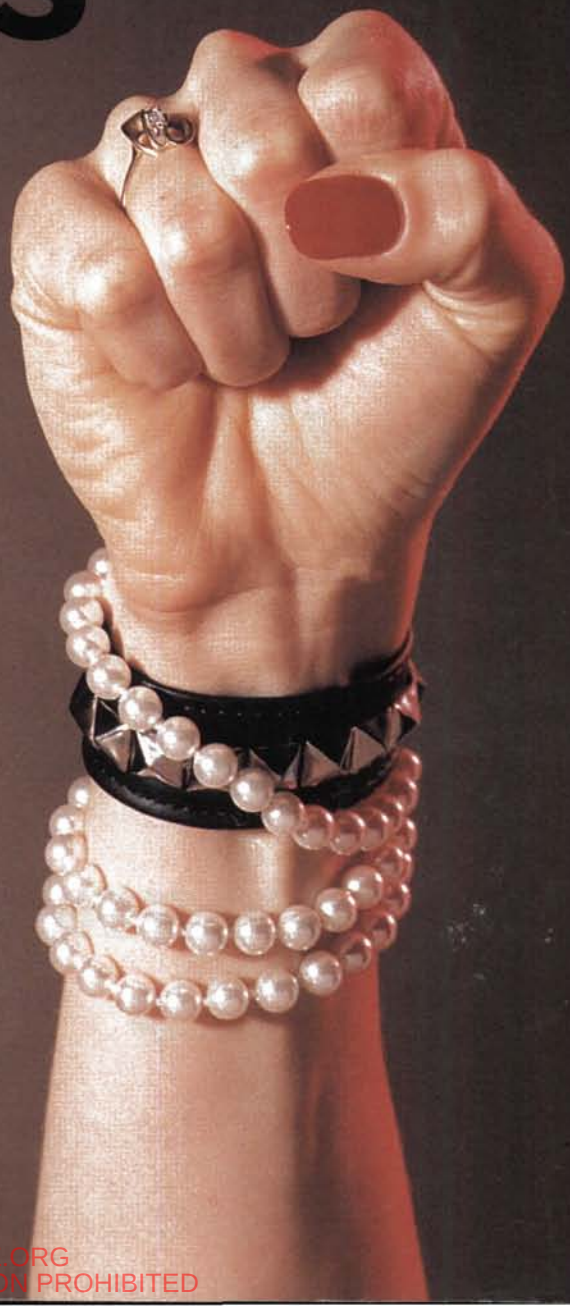

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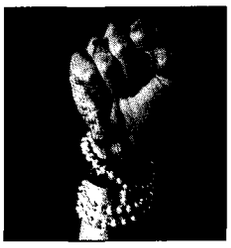

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CORRESPONDENCE

Buffeting Buffett

To the editors:

Michael Lewis precedes his article on Warren Buffett ("The Temptation of St. Warren," February 17) with a quotation from Adam Smith: "I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good." I've known Warren Buffett since he bought a big stake in the company I work for in 1974. I've read most of what he's written since then. I've never heard him say or understood him to write that his aim is "trading for the public good." I don't see how it could be clearer that he is chairman of a large diversified corporation and acts, as best one can, in the interest of its shareholders. What is unusual about Buffett is the brains, judgment, and honesty with which he does his job. I have watched for seventeen years as he has confronted a variety of business situations including some that in one way or another test principles and character.

Nobody's perfect. Warren Buffett is about as good as it gets.

DONALD E. GRAHAM
Washington, D.C.

The writer is president of the Washington Post Company.

To the editors:

Michael Lewis's article is so loaded with cheap shots, half-truths, and distortions that it would take a dissertation to set the record straight. Examine just this one sentence that Lewis offers as proof that Warren Buffett has not only changed with the years, but "sold his reputation." "In the middle of 1988 he broke with his strict rule of long-term investing and became an arbitrageur, which is to say he speculated on pending takeovers." Since Lewis purports to know something about finance, I assume he knows the difference between arbitrage and speculation, but didn't choose to share this knowledge with your readers.

Arbitrage in its purest form is the simultaneous purchase and sale of the same or equivalent securities in order to profit from price discrepancies. It has come to include investing in announced corporate events, including mergers, restructuring, acquisitions, etc. Although not risk free (the risk is that the announced corporate event will not take place), it is, as practiced by Buffett, a fairly conservative form of investment. Anyone who wants to understand the subject can find an excellent exposition in the Berkshire Hathaway Annual Report for 1988, written by Warren Buffett. Any fair-minded person reading that section of the report would conclude that Buffett's activities that year were far from speculative.

Even a biased reader would note that in Buffett's discussion he made the following statement: "Some offbeat opportunities occasionally arise in the arbitrage field. I participated in one of these when I was 24 and working in New York for Graham-Newman Corp." John Train devoted a chapter to Buffett's investment style in *The Money Masters*. Describing the operations of the Buffett Partnership, which started in 1956 and operated until 1969, Train summarizes Buffett's investment style as follows: "In general, he bought undervalued listed stocks, but also was usually involved in merger arbitrage situations." Buffett's letters to his partners over those years repeatedly referred to arbitrage activity.

Why do I belabor this single point? Simply to illustrate that not only is arbitrage not a departure from Buffett's "rule of long-term investing," but that anyone who did the slightest research would have known that it was not.

A final point: I wonder how Lewis could conclude that Buffett's performance lagged the market the last two years. In spite of the size of his current operations, which Buffett has repeatedly pointed out will have to impact his performance at some point, Berkshire Hathaway's increase in net worth in 1989 and 1990 handily beat the market. (Results for 1991 are not available.) The figures for the Standard and Poor's 500 were a gain of 31.6 percent in 1989 and a loss of 3.1 percent in 1990. Berkshire's gains in the same years were 44.4 percent and 7.3 percent.

Buffett is no saint, nor am I aware of any claims in that direction. Certainly he has changed over the years. Probably he has done some things that deserve criticism. However, the size of his accomplishments is enormous, and this story is a disgrace.

WILLIAM W. GRAHAM
Los Angeles, California

The writer is the managing general partner with Graham Partners.

To the editors:

Michael Lewis managed to quote an obscure publication that referred to an anonymous source at *The Wall Street Journal* as stating that either James Burke or Warren Buffett is a liar. That is zero documentation of an accusation against two of the finest citizens in our country. The incident Lewis referred to involves a telephone conversation that took place between the two and was inaccurately reported by *The Wall Street Journal*. The two men agree on exactly when and what was said, and therefore it seems sad that two such respectable publications as *The Wall Street Journal* and TNR have become associated with this type of allegation.

Contrary to Lewis's flat statement, Buffett never offered financial backing to Ross Johnson for the leveraged buyout of RJR. In fact, his company, Berkshire Hathaway, declined an invitation by a different party to participate in the bidding for RJR. Salomon Brothers, separately, did consider participation in the Johnson group buyout and Buffett, as a director, did not object to a plan at a price that he thought was sensible. There is nothing inherently unethical about leveraged buyout transactions, intelligently structured. It is financial excesses that Buffett opposes, not leveraged buyouts in and of themselves.

Further, Buffett's subsequent purchase of RJR junk bonds was made in the public market at prices far below the original issue price. When he bought them, fear prevailed but the price was very attractive to Buffett, an investor who was guided by facts rather than emotions. Buffett's significant profit later realized on these bonds is simply one example of the intelligent investing that has made him rich. The examples Lewis gives of Buffett's sudden decline into moral turpitude simply reveal Lewis's lack of comprehension of what is and is not ethical investing.

Lewis goes on to state that "the reason [Buffett] is rich is simply that random games produce big winners." If you believe that is how Buffett turned the $10,000 he earned as a 19-year-old into his current net worth of $4 billion, you might also conclude that Jack Nicklaus won six Masters, four U.S. Opens, five PGA Tournaments, and three British Opens simply by making a long series of wonderful random shots. Enormous talent combined with an extraordinary regimen of hard work had nothing to do with it? Come on, Lewis.

WILLIAM J. RUANE
New York, New York

The writer is chairman of the board of Ruane, Cunniff & Co., Inc.

Michael Lewis replies:

Buffett's friends' largely trivial complaints fail to close the gap between his public posture and his actions. The clever arbitrage Buffett describes himself having engaged in as a 24-year-old involved buying cocoa in one market and simultaneously selling it in another for a profit. It is absurd to suggest that this has anything in common with his more recent trading in the shares of RJR Nabisco. The first is arbitrage in the original sense of the word; the second is short-term speculation, pure and simple. When I wrote that he became an arbitrageur in 1988, I was using the word in its more recent incar-

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nation, which is speculation on the outcome of takeovers. Buffett—not I—took the public position that this sort of short-term speculation of the 1980s was immoral: bad for the nation's economy, etc. He voiced this view—together with his disapproval of Wall Street, junk bonds, and leveraged buyouts—loudly during the 1980s boom, which is partly why he became so well known and so often praised as a long-term investor.

On one point William Graham is half-right and I was half-wrong. I am sorry I wrote that Buffett's portfolio lagged the market for the past two years. In fact, it lagged the market last year only. The numbers are available for 1991. The net worth of Berkshire Hathaway increased by 28 percent, while the Standard & Poor's 500 increased by 30.5 percent. The larger point—that Buffett is no longer performing as well as he once did—stands.

As for the other complaints: RJR Nabisco qualifies as a badly structured leveraged buyout; it very nearly went belly up. Several sources close to the RJR Nabisco deal told *The New York Times* at the time that Buffett had offered his financial backing to Ross Johnson, though, of course, this came to nothing when Johnson lost. It is silly to continue to compare a stock market trader to Jack Nicklaus when market studies suggest strongly that the market is a game of chance rather than of skill. (For a good review of this see Eugene Fama's article in the recent *Journal of Finance.*) In any case, as I said in my piece, Buffett's business fell outside the theory once he began to cut sweet deals with CEOs.

Charlotte's web

To the editors:

I cannot understand why you saw fit to print Charlotte Hays's venomous and dishonest piece about *The Washington Times* ("Moondoggle," February 17). It was an amalgam of gratuitous insults to those with unfamiliar religious beliefs, gossip culled from old clips, and a stew of poor Charlotte's own insecurities and bitter resentments. For reasons locked up in her own heart, Charlotte invariably turns on old friends and colleagues in places where she has worked. I think it too bad that the editors of TNR, who had been eager enough to sell their wares for syndicated re-publication in *The Washington Times* over the years, cannot discipline their bigotries and baser instincts.

WESLEY PRUDEN
Washington, D.C.

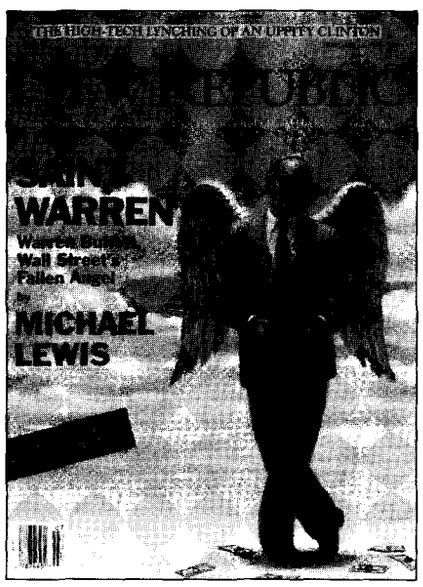
The writer is managing editor of *The Washington Times.*

To the editors:

I've worked at *The Washington Times* for the past seven years and I couldn't begin to count the number of stories I've read in competing newspapers and magazines about our publication—some accurate, some not. But TNR takes the cake for publishing one of the most outright blasphemous and racist articles to date.

Would your editors have accepted an article from a contributing author who described members of other religious groups as "dim and goofy," as Hays did members of the Unification Church, solely because they happened to be Catholics, Presbyterians, or Jews? Is Hays's repeated use of the term "Moonie" not the same as referring to those of the Jewish faith, on every reference, as "kikes"?

As for the inaccuracies in the article, I won't waste my time. I've read them all before. My only wish is that those who



call themselves writers, as Hays does, and who remain mystified by this newspaper and plan on writing about it in the future, will make an effort to talk to at least one or two of the several hundred professional editors, reporters, columnists, photographers, artists, printers, and others who are very proud of our award-winning paper and the impact it has had on the nation's capital. By all means continue to interview the disgruntled and even the paranoid like Hays, but balance your articles with what some of the rest of us have to say. Our quotes might not fit the tone of your story, but for once you'll be honest journalists.

JOHN MCCASLIN
Washington, D.C.

The writer is articles and opinion editor for *The Washington Times.*

To the editors:

I was enchanted by Charlotte Hays's picture of the Rev. Moon, down on his hands and knees, so overwrought that he pounded his fist on the podium. Could he have pounded a lectern, maybe?

JAMES J. KILPATRICK
Charleston, South Carolina

To the editors:

Wow. Working at *The Washington Times* sounds pretty scary, particularly the part about where Charlotte Hays says I used to wear dark glasses indoors and once told a reporter that the devil is real—something about which, incidentally, I am more convinced than ever after working at the *Times* for more than seven years.

JOHN LOFTON
Laurel, Maryland

The writer is a former columnist for *The Washington Times.*

Standing by Tammy

To the editors:

You just don't get it, do you? In your February 17 Notebook you seem not to understand Tammy Wynette's concern about Hillary Clinton's "Stand By Your Man" comment on "60 Minutes." The problem was with the mocking tone and hokey Southern accent used by Ms. Clinton when referring to Ms. Wynette and the sentiments expressed in the song. Now you have done the same thing by referring to her as a "starlet" and by saying she "may be doin' jus' a lil' bit o' overreactin.'" She is one of the great country music artists (not a "starlet"), and the last time I heard her she did not sound like Uncle Remus.

MARK PAPAPIETRO
Plainville, Connecticut

Maliboo

To the editors:

We are all duly impressed that Jim Holt ("Don't Walk," February 17) knows David Hockney well enough to have vacationed at the artist's Hollywood Hills and Malibu homes, and that he is close friends with Steve Martin.

I'm not surprised that Holt didn't see any other pedestrians while taking a walk in the Hollywood Hills. The narrow, winding streets with no sidewalks are not particularly safe; the people he noticed watching him with "squinty, suspicious eyes" probably thought he was crazy. If Holt had used his head, he would have thought to go for a walk on the beach while staying at Hockney's Malibu home. Then not only might he have gotten the impression that people do walk in L.A., but he might have run into some more famous people, whose names he could drop in this or future articles.

SUSAN Z. MEYER
North Hollywood, California

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FROM WASHINGTON

Arts and crafts

There's nothing important George Bush knew about John Frohnmayer the day he fired him, February 20, that he didn't already know the day he hired Frohnmayer two-and-a-half years ago. And indeed, the unceremonious dumping of the chairman of the Arts Endowment tells us nothing we didn't already know about George Bush. But it's a timely reminder.

In 1989, when Frohnmayer was appointed, Bush was just beginning his presidency. He had won the 1988 election with a remarkable exercise of hateful demagoguery, but now he was eager to show that the real George Bush was classier than that. He was in his "kinder, gentler" phase. He wanted to differentiate himself from Ronald Reagan. He wanted to win back the respect of establishment elites, if not of actual liberals.

Politics, to George Bush, is performance art. Not unlike the notorious Karen Finley, he had smeared himself with symbolic excrement. Now the performance was over and he wanted a shower.

So he picked John Frohnmayer, a high-minded Oregon lawyer and certified artsy-fartsy, to head the controversial National Endowment for the Arts. And Frohnmayer did exactly what Bush wanted. He threaded the needle between right-wing arts bashers and the arts establishment, attempting to minimize offense to either group. He canceled a grant to an AIDS art exhibit when the right started barking, then restored the grant when the artsies barked louder. His tenure was not always an exercise in principle, but it was a moderate Republican's earnest approximation. It was, in short, George Bush's presidency on its best behavior.

Total courage would not be expected of—or even recommended to—a man in Frohnmayer's position. Frohnmayer generally doled out his courage in wisely calibrated amounts. But any dose of political courage is apparently intolerable to George Bush in election season. With Pat Buchanan on the stump denouncing the Arts Endowment as "the upholstered playpen of the arts-and-crafts auxiliary of the Eastern liberal establishment," Frohnmayer had to go.

The rise and fall of John Frohnmayer is thus a small metaphor for George Bush as a person and as a president. He knows what's right and he'll do it—if there's no reason not to. He sincerely wants to be virtuous. He just doesn't want it very badly. If it's a choice between virtue and something else he wants, like re-election, virtue is the first to go.

Bush doesn't even have the courage of his lack of convictions. Look at the snaky way he let Frohnmayer go: pretending he had quit, praising his "integrity and decency," but adding that "some of the art funded by the NEA does not have my enthusiastic approval." What an artfully qualified remark. Give that man a grant. But does Bush share Buchanan's disapproval of Frohnmayer's NEA or does he not? Don't ask.

In a country that's going down the rat hole in several dozen ways, this question of arts subsidies plays an absurdly overblown role in the public debate. For the Rev. Donald Wildmons and Senator Jesse Helmses, it's a valuable "hot button" issue to use in direct-mail fundraising. For them, and for a presidential candidate like Buchanan, it's junk-food populism: a high-calorie, low-nutrition substitute for serious politics. To hear Helms and Buchanan, you would think that a large part of the federal deficit could be eliminated if we would only stop paying people to take pictures of themselves with a bullwhip up their rectums.

Even some long-time supporters of government arts subsidies are starting to wonder if these battles are worth it. Other rich countries manage to subsidize the arts far more generously than we do without much fuss. But maybe our political culture just isn't up to it. In real life, as distinct from the theater of politics, the NEA is just one way the government subsidizes art. Even without direct subsidies there would still be the indirect subsidy of tax-deductible private contributions. And there is the huge unacknowledged subsidy of performing artists called unemployment compensation.

From a liberal point of view, the case for government arts subsidies is not without flaws. The typical customer of the subsidized arts—museums, opera, public television, etc.—is clearly more affluent than the typical taxpayer. Heroic efforts of arts advocates to prove otherwise are unconvincing. Movies, baseball games,

continued on page 41

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MARCH 16, 1992

PANDER TIME

The most depressing lesson from the South Dakota primary is that the Democrats can still unite around one theme: support for the nation's absurd, costly farm policies. Those who watched the main television debate before the primary saw the alleged party of the people pander samelessly to the wealthiest special interest group in America. Ken Bode, the CNN moderator, led off one question by declaring, "Today's farmers are older, they're poorer, and they're fewer than ever before." In reality, today's farmers are far richer than most Americans, and far wealthier than their forefathers. According to USDA statistics, the average full-time farmer is a millionaire. Even farmers in the part-time class have an average net worth of over $300,000.

The silliest notion floated in the debate was that the government has not done enough to help these folks. Farm subsidies—roughly $20 billion a year in federal handouts and $12 billion more in higher food prices—are the equivalent of giving every full-time subsidized farmer a new Mercedes Benz every year. Annual subsidies for each dairy cow in the United States exceed the per capita income for half the world's population. With the $300-plus billion that government and consumers have spent on farm subsidies since 1980, we could have bought every farm, barn, and tractor in thirty-three states.

The debate capped a week of farm-belt pandering. In a February 21 speech before the South Dakota legislature, Bob Kerrey called for more supply management programs to boost farm prices. "Supply management" is a euphemism for paying farmers not to work. The federal government is currently paying farmers to idle more than 50 million acres of crop land in order to inflate crop prices. Kerrey—along with Harkin—wants to shut down more acres to inflate prices even further. In the debate, Kerrey fixated on the notion that "the loan rates are too low, and it makes it difficult for us ... to be able to get the price in a range where the producer can make a profit without having to provide a subsidy." The "loan rates" are federal price support levels; Kerrey favors raising these levels, a policy that would enrich already rich producers and, since it would make food more expensive, impoverish consumers.

Senator Tom Harkin drove around South Dakota in a pickup truck fueled with ethanol, hooting about his commitment to more subsidies for ethanol production: "Ethanol really is a win-win situation for all of us." In fact, it's lose-lose. An Agriculture Department study concluded that each $1 of benefits provided to farmers via ethanol costs consumers and taxpayers $4. Ethanol production is extremely profitable for politicians, though, since Archer Daniel Midland, the nation's largest ethanol producer, gushes money into the pockets of its political supporters like Harkin.

Governor Bill Clinton bragged in the debate about his state program of tax-exempt bonds to provide subsidized credit for first-time farm buyers. More credit is exactly what American farmers do not need; when it doesn't push them into bankruptcy, it increases land values, which in turn raises farmers' cost of production and undermines their competitiveness. Though Clinton joined the hosannas to the family farmer, he dodged a question about whether the government should effectively restrict payments to $50,000 per farmer. Arkansas rice farmers receive among the highest subsidies of anyone on the USDA dole, and Clinton protects them. Clinton's final point was to call for more agricultural export subsidies. Perhaps most disappointing of all was Paul Tsongas, the alleged candidate of truth, who challenged none of this malarkey and was just as sycophantic toward farmers, though more vague about specifics than his rivals.

Current farm policy is institutionalized penalization of consumers. In any sane country running a $400 billion a year deficit, agricultural subsidies would be phased out as quickly as possible. Any party that claims to support "the forgotten middle class" should have no truck with a policy that harms American productivity, increases food prices for middle- and low-income families, and costs the taxpayer billions of dollars a year. Today's Democrats, of all people, should have a look at their policy of enriching the rich at the expense of the poor, and switch sides. •

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NOTEBOOK

BUSHISM OF THE WEEK: "Because I'm a little bit tired—well, I'll give you an example, I'll give you an example. This state of Tennessee had 6,700 Reservists and Guardsmen volunteer—one community of 1,000 had eighteen people—this is the volunteer state, people are still very proud of the fact of this—of Desert Storm. And there is a national pride there, there's a pride in having a strong America. That's my position—a strong America, and having led a very triumphant and very important war over there." —February 19, at a press conference in Tennessee

OPERATION ANFALA: Reports now arriving in the West about Iraqi atrocities against the Kurds in the late 1980s beggar the belief even of those who were unillusioned about the Baath regime. By some Kurdish estimates, some 180,000 people may have been liquidated by systematic mass killings, gas attacks, and torture. In meticulously detailed documents, recovered by Kurds during their brief liberation a year ago, the Baath agents reportedly recorded such events as carrying truckloads of Kurdish civilians to open pits, forcing them to stand in them, and gunning them down en masse, before bulldozing the earth. Organizations such as Middle East Watch have discovered mass graves that lend credence to such accounts. Among other documents recovered are tapes reportedly recording the Baath defense minister, Ali Hassan Majeed, boasting that "we have been gassing them escaping. We gas them not once, not twice, but until we get rid of them." We hope this material can be gathered and verified by independent experts as soon as possible. We hope also that the Bush administration begins to realize the gravity of its decision to betray the Kurds last year to one of the most brutal regimes the world has seen since the demise of the Third Reich.

UNISEXISM:

COMING OUT OF HER CLOSET

Designers put feminine touch
on their bold fall lines for men

—*Chicago Sun-Times*, "Fashion," February 5

Falling in place

Menswear designers take
a very masculine approach
to fall fashions.

—*Chicago Tribune*, "Style," same day

(thanks to Elizabeth Elving Bass, DeKalb, Illinois)

Bush in New Hampshire.

THE SHRUB FILE

By Douglas G. McGrath

Another unsolicited report from Secret Service Agent Duke, assigned to the president.

Wednesday, January 15, 1992—Washington

12:13 p.m. Shrub met with reporters. He said, "Let me just say to those out there who are out there churning around, saying I don't know there's a recession on, I say, hey! Of course, I know it. Who do they think was president of the whole country when it started? Times are bad. Recovery's been ripcorded. Never known a time as tough as this one and I'm counting that time the maids went on strike at Andover. Economy's in a free fall. *I know it.* Nobody's got their hand on the wheel. *I hear you.* Families can't find food, men can't find jobs, babies are being pulled off their incubators. Oh, actually, that was—well, never mind. If that is the message the American people are trying to leave on the phone machine of the Bush White House, we've got it—flipped it over and saved it. Because I am the Understands the Recession President."

Friday, January 17—White House

Apparently, people found the Shrub's remarks so severe, they now think the country is in a depression. At his lunch with the Vice-Shrub, the Shrub asked him what he thought about this. The Sapling said he thought it was actually good news. "Think how happy they'll be when they find out we're only in a recession!"

Saturday, January 25—White House

With the Buzz Saw gaining ground in the primary, Mr. Teeter has dispatched conservatives to New Hampshire to speak up for the Shrub. None of them wanted to, but the Shrub said that if they played along, he'd fire someone for them. (Word is the NEA guy has got it coming. Too many ladies in chocolate.) The Shrub knows that if he wants to pull this out of the fire, he'll have to do it himself. After he met with Mr. Skinner, he told us, "Pack your baggies, fellas, we're heading for the Hambone!"

Wednesday, February 12—Nashua, New Hampshire

We took the Shrub to an "Ask the President" session at William Loeb Elementary. Ever since the broccoli thing, the Shrub is very popular with kids. This session was K through five. That's a nice age, still pretty innocent. We only confiscated twelve pistols and a deer

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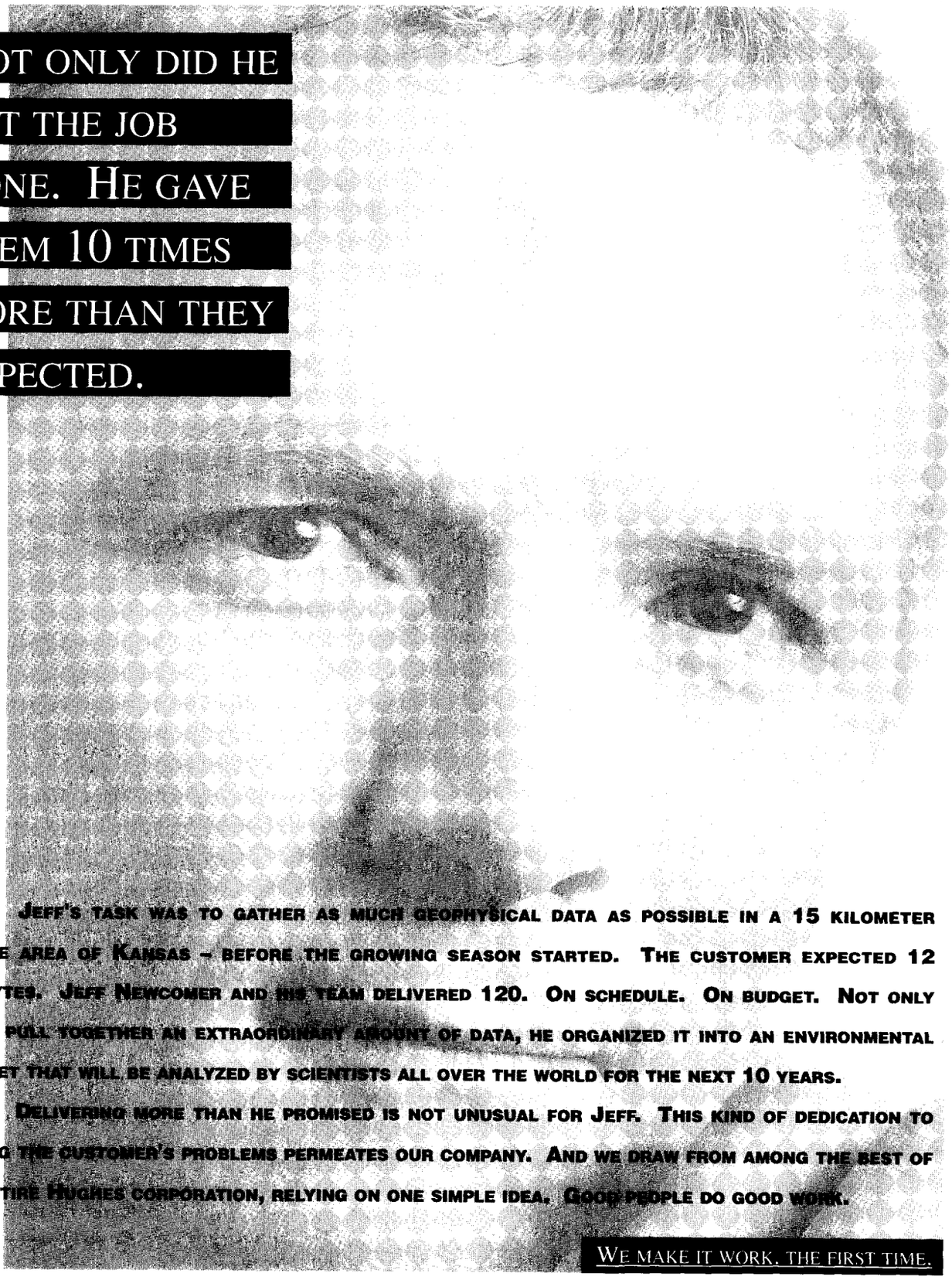
NOT ONLY DID HE GET THE JOB DONE. HE GAVE THEM 10 TIMES MORE THAN THEY EXPECTED.



JEFF'S TASK WAS TO GATHER AS MUCH GEOPHYSICAL DATA AS POSSIBLE IN A 15 KILOMETER SQUARE AREA OF KANSAS – BEFORE THE GROWING SEASON STARTED. THE CUSTOMER EXPECTED 12 GIGABYTES. JEFF NEWCOMER AND HIS TEAM DELIVERED 120. ON SCHEDULE. ON BUDGET. NOT ONLY DID HE PULL TOGETHER AN EXTRAORDINARY AMOUNT OF DATA, HE ORGANIZED IT INTO AN ENVIRONMENTAL DATA SET THAT WILL BE ANALYZED BY SCIENTISTS ALL OVER THE WORLD FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS.

DELIVERING MORE THAN HE PROMISED IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR JEFF. THIS KIND OF DEDICATION TO SOLVING THE CUSTOMER'S PROBLEMS PERMEATES OUR COMPANY. AND WE DRAW FROM AMONG THE BEST OF THE ENTIRE HUGHES CORPORATION, RELYING ON ONE SIMPLE IDEA. GOOD PEOPLE DO GOOD WORK.

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rifle. (I should let you know there was a 602-C at the door. Mrs. Loeb, the newspaper publisher, tried to get into the room disguised as a gym teacher. She set off the alarm. We frisked and found a package of darts under her sweats. When we tried to remove her, she knocked Agent Banks to the ground, bit him repeatedly, and lengthened his right arm.)

Once the Q and A started, a little girl asked the Shrub what his proudest achievement was. He said, "When I took office, flag burning was tearing this country apart. I said I'd do something about it and I did. Drew a line in the sands of the Persian Gulf and I drew a line for Old Glory."

The little girl raised her hand. "How can you draw a line in a gulf?"

The Shrub glared at her a little and said, "That's a question for your geography—or physics—teacher. Anyway, a message on Bush stationery went out to the Betsy Ross burners and flag fires started going out with laserlike speed."

She started to ask a follow-up but the Shrub was getting irritated. He gave me the signal for a B-19 from Agent Simons. Agent Simons approached the little girl and told her that her mother had been in an accident and was in the hospital. Man, did she start crying; we could hear her all the way to the parking lot. I almost felt sorry for her, but then I thought how happy she'd be when she learned it wasn't true. That's the beauty of a B-19.

6:59—Orlando, Florida.

The Shrub went to an industrial show in which equipment for supermarkets was demonstrated. He stood at a sample check-out stand and was amazed by the electronic scanner that reads prices off the cans. He played with that over and over, giggling and clapping. Then he noticed the cans moving toward the cashier. He became very excited and raised his voice. "Look at that! Are you telling me—are the cans *themselves* automated? I mean, look at 'em, they're walking right up to the cash register!"

The woman behind the counter said, "Actually, Mr. President, it's a conveyor belt."

The Shrub said, "Oh. Super. Gotcha. And when will this be available for regular supermarkets?"

Saturday, February 15—New Hampshire

Things were getting so bad for the Shrub that Mr. Teeter had to fly in Arnold Schwarzenegger. Me and the other agents were pretty excited about this, and met him before for autographs. Agent Banks asked him if they could arm-wrestle. Mr. Schwarzenegger agreed and Agent Banks won!

On the plane back, the Shrub asked him what it was like to wrestle the Terminator. "He's tough," Agent Banks said, "but he doesn't hold a candle to Mrs. Loeb."

"I hear you," said the Shrub, and I thought he looked a little forlorn.

DOUGLAS G. MCGRATH is a playwright and screenwriter.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

WAR FOOTING

By Fred Barnes

Once movie star Arnold Schwarzenegger was summoned to appear with President Bush in New Hampshire on February 15, the Bush strategy against Patrick Buchanan was firmly in place. Contacted by campaign strategist Jim Pinkerton, Schwarzenegger flew overnight from California in his private jet to join Bush for lunch and an afternoon of campaign events. After being part of Bush's 1988 campaign, Schwarzenegger asked to be chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness. A memo backing his bid went to Bush. "This is great," Bush jotted in the margin. "I'm high on Conan."

After shilly-shallying for weeks, the Bushies have finally decided on a strategy. It's simple: crush Buchanan in every caucus and primary and drive him out of the race after Super Tuesday on March 10. They assume Buchanan will win no contests. So they'll muster Republicans, especially conservatives, all over the country on March 11 to proclaim noisily that it's time for Buchanan to drop out. "He'll have to withdraw," says a senior campaign official, "or he'll be seen as a guy who's sabotaging Bush." Samuel Skinner, the White House chief of staff, says Buchanan "will turn off voters and turn off the party" if he persists.

To stifle Buchanan, the White House and campaign staffs are on wartime footing. "We wish we didn't have to do this," says a Bush adviser. "But Buchanan forced us to." The first White House session of the day is no longer the senior staff meeting. Now it's preceded by a 7:30 a.m. meeting in Skinner's office. Skinner, campaign chiefs Bob Teeter and Fred Malek, Skinner deputy Henson Moore, budget director Richard Darman, Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater, and several others talk about the campaign. Throughout the day, meetings are held on specialized campaign topics—schedule, message, surrogates, TV ads (the media consultants are known at the White House as "the three amigos"). Then Teeter drops by Skinner's office at the end of each day for a wrap-up session.

The Bushies are not happy people. Buchanan's attacks have gotten under their skin, and under Bush's too. He resented being called "King George" by Buchanan in New Hampshire. "To get personal is annoying to everyone," says Skinner. The day after the New Hampshire primary, Buchanan demanded a

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debate with Bush. Fitzwater dutifully asked Bush about it. "Marlin, you know the answer to that," the president said. "Not in my lifetime?" Fitzwater said. "Yep," Bush snapped. The president, however, relishes the shots taken at Buchanan. His favorite was by former drug czar William Bennett, who declared that Buchanan "sounds like George McGovern in foreign policy, sounds like Richard Gephardt in trade policy, and sounds like Jackson in policy toward Israel—not Scoop Jackson, but Jesse Jackson."

In their eagerness to crush Buchanan, the Bush high command has made two questionable decisions. One is to have the president campaign practically full-time in the two weeks before Super Tuesday. "With any challenge at all, you've got to go," insists a senior White House official. "We don't have an option." Actually there is one. Bennett has talked repeatedly to Bush and others at the White House about it. Bennett's idea is a Pennsylvania Avenue strategy that calls for Bush to stay in town and concentrate his fire on Congress, not Buchanan. He would fire away with new initiatives, attacks, media events. "Remember," says a Bennett ally at the White House, "President Bush is a much stronger candidate than George Bush." But by campaigning frantically, Bush may turn the race into a Ford-Reagan grudge match in which Bush diminishes himself and elevates Buchanan. That's the argument, anyway. Bush, Skinner, and Teeter rejected it.

The other decision was to go negative on Buchanan. The Bushies were rightly wary of doing this in New Hampshire. "The press would have killed us," says Fitzwater. Two things changed their mind: first Buchanan's accusation that Bush reneged on his promise to push a middle-class tax cut, then how well Buchanan did in New Hampshire. More than anything else Buchanan has done, the allegation of another White House betrayal on taxes angered Bush and his aides. "He just out and out lied," says Skinner. For doubters, Skinner displays a chart produced in January before Bush's State of the Union address. It shows the $500 boost in the personal exemption as part of the "intermediate and long-term agenda," not the emergency economic recovery agenda. OK, the distinction between short- and long-term agendas is legitimate, but I'm afraid it's lost on voters. On the other hand, Buchanan's accusation is understandable: Bush promised a middle-class tax cut, but it isn't in the bill he ~ nts Congress to pass now.

The problem with driving a stake through Buchanan's heart is that it might alienate conservatives whose votes Bush needs in the fall. So the attacks are cleverly parceled out. Bush never mentions Buchanan by name in speeches. This is known at the White House as being "above the fray." Vice President Dan Quayle is allowed to get more specific. He warned in a speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference on February 21 that conservatives "risk being out of power for a generation" if Buchanan wounds Bush so badly that a Democrat wins the White House. Others like House Republican Whip Newt Gingrich are permitted to get more specific still, zinging Buchanan directly and by name. My guess is that conservatives won't be alienated; they know about hardball. A negative TV spot points out Buchanan's opposition to Desert Storm. That's also safe with conservatives, most of whom disagree with Buchanan on the Gulf war.

The drive to eliminate Buchanan prompted Bush speechwriters to come up earlier than expected with a standard stump speech for the president. It's an amalgam of conservative themes. From consultant Mike Murphy, Bush has taken the theme of change. "Republican leadership will change America," he told a GOP crowd in Charleston, South Carolina, on February 21. He blasted big government, pundits, and lawyers. "We believe in less government, low taxes," he said. "We believe that parents, not the government, should make the big decisions" about their children's school and health care. "And another thing. Maybe this is just my personal prejudice talking. Let's not listen to the gloom and doom from all those intense talking heads who are happy only when they say something negative. We are the United States of America and we don't have to put up with all that." This caused the Charleston audience to erupt with chants of "four more years, four more years."

The speech is pretty thin stuff. Bush aides concede as much. "We need to sharpen the message," says a senior adviser. Bush needs improvement too. He was an effective campaigner in 1988—really—but he's lost his touch. Schwarzenegger outshines him. After lunch at the Holiday Inn in Manchester, New Hampshire, on February 15, Bush shook hands with a line of hotel employees. A young woman didn't mince words when Bush approached her. "I want to meet Arnold Schwarzenegger," she said. •

The last gasp of Mario Cuomo.

THE COWARD

By Sidney Blumenthal

All day, a charter airplane warmed its engines, ready to speed the governor of New York from Albany to Concord, New Hampshire, where, within minutes of the filing deadline, he would declare his presidential ambition. A large party of local political notables huddled at a hotel near the airport, prepared at a moment's notice to rush there to hail the hero. "Hurry, hurry!" shouted an excited aide to the restive press corps. "Get ready to go to the plane!" Mario Cuomo was to appear at eleven; then noon; then

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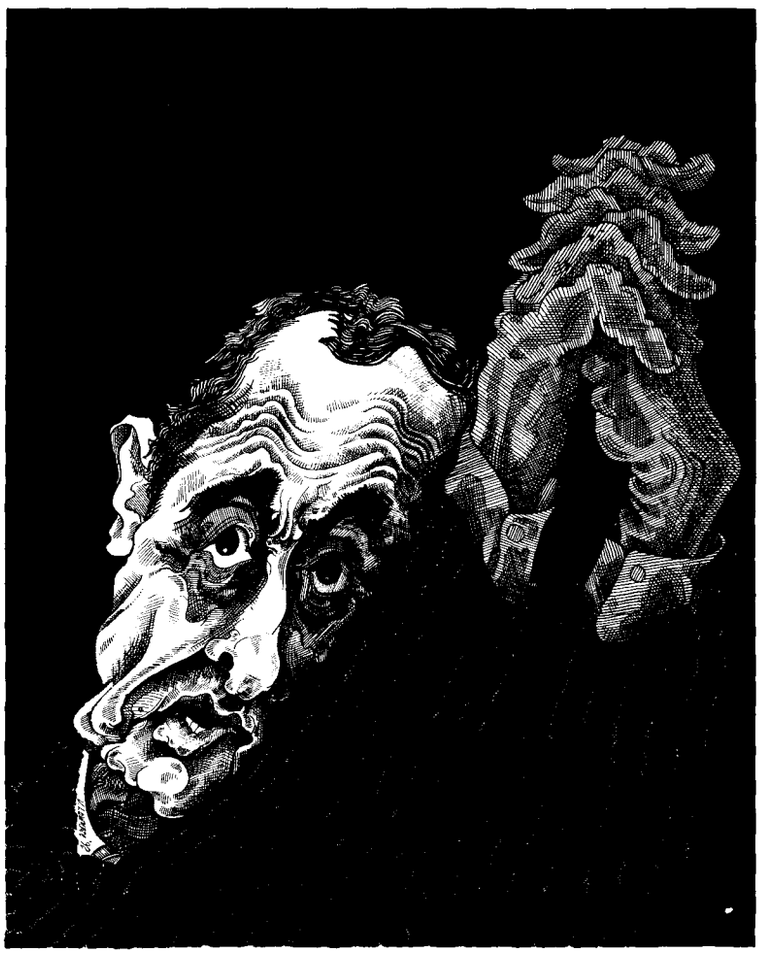
one. Hours passed. He was alone, writing his statement, honing his eloquence. Finally, after three, he emerged from his chamber, and bowed out. But this was a false cue. Cuomo still wanted to have a campaign, but without having to campaign. His choice not to run was simply a gambit in his run, which he could only accomplish on his own self-protective terms.

The key to this reflex is Cuomo's parochialism. Cuomo has always lived a village life. His departure from Queens to Albany was no break in this: for fourteen years, since he was elected lieutenant governor, he built a small, familiar world up the Hudson. His closest adviser remains his son Andrew. "He doesn't allow the development of other personalities around him," says a New York political figure who has been close to him for almost twenty years. "People around him are terrified of him. They don't say, 'Don't say that.'" In Albany Cuomo has offended almost all the other leaders. He has no close allies. Even when his popularity was high, he would not expend his political capital to help his party win the state Senate. When he won by a landslide in 1986, he was commonly called "a sore winner."



MARIO CUOMO BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Cuomo the villager loathes travel. According to *The New York Times*'s Kevin Sack, Cuomo has spent a mere thirty-six nights away from the executive mansion in the 3,187 days he has been governor. He even took the red-eye back the night he delivered his famous keynote address at the 1984 Democratic Convention in San Francisco. "I come from the old school and the old neighborhood," he told Larry King last month. Cuomo is quick to recall his shame as a boy about his Italian-inflected English, the ethnic slights he endured from his friends' mothers, his rejections from Wall Street law firms. He acts as though the world of ethnic limits in which he grew up were still in place. At a recent meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, he remarked that he has occasionally been mistaken for Lee Iacocca: "You know we all look alike," he said, glancing toward David Dinkins. For Cuomo, membership in the family of New York seems to mean sharing a common ethnic taint.

Cuomo's rumination about running for president was a wrestling match with his demons. In 1985 he blurted angrily to a startled group of reporters: "You're telling me that the Mafia is an organization, and I'm telling you that's a lot of baloney." The following year he said without prompting: "If anything could make me change my mind about running for the presidency it's people talking about 'an Italian can't do it, a Catholic can't do it.'" Constantly he speaks about how ludicrous it would be if he changed his name to "Mark Conrad"—his imaginary WASP doppelgänger. He is deathly afraid of the unknown, of WASPs, of the mysterious country beyond the Hudson. But his sense of the rigid boundaries of ethnicity are less a measure of reality than of his lack of psychological assimilation. The isolation and insecurity he must feel is mainly rooted in himself. He's welcome to the party, but fearful of coming; it would mean recognizing a world that is unfamiliar.

Always afraid that others might overshadow him, Cuomo has mastered the small art of belittlement. When Walter Mondale ran for president, Cuomo called him "polenta," or Italian corn mush. Then Cuomo explained that his mother had said it and it meant that Mondale had the character of that sturdy, reliable food. In 1988 Cuomo spent much of the campaign creating circumstances in which Michael Dukakis appeared small, forced to seek his blessing and endorsement, which he would not grant. The day after the primaries ended, Cuomo announced that the question of endorsement was irrelevant in any case since he was always going to endorse the winner. But reporters pressed him to say something about Dukakis. They needed more than Cuomo's solipsism for their lead. "I endorse him! I endorse him! I endorse him!" Cuomo shouted. In endorsing other politicians, Cuomo often lauds them excessively. "It's an incredible trick, a device," said a New York politico. "His modesty is literally incredible."

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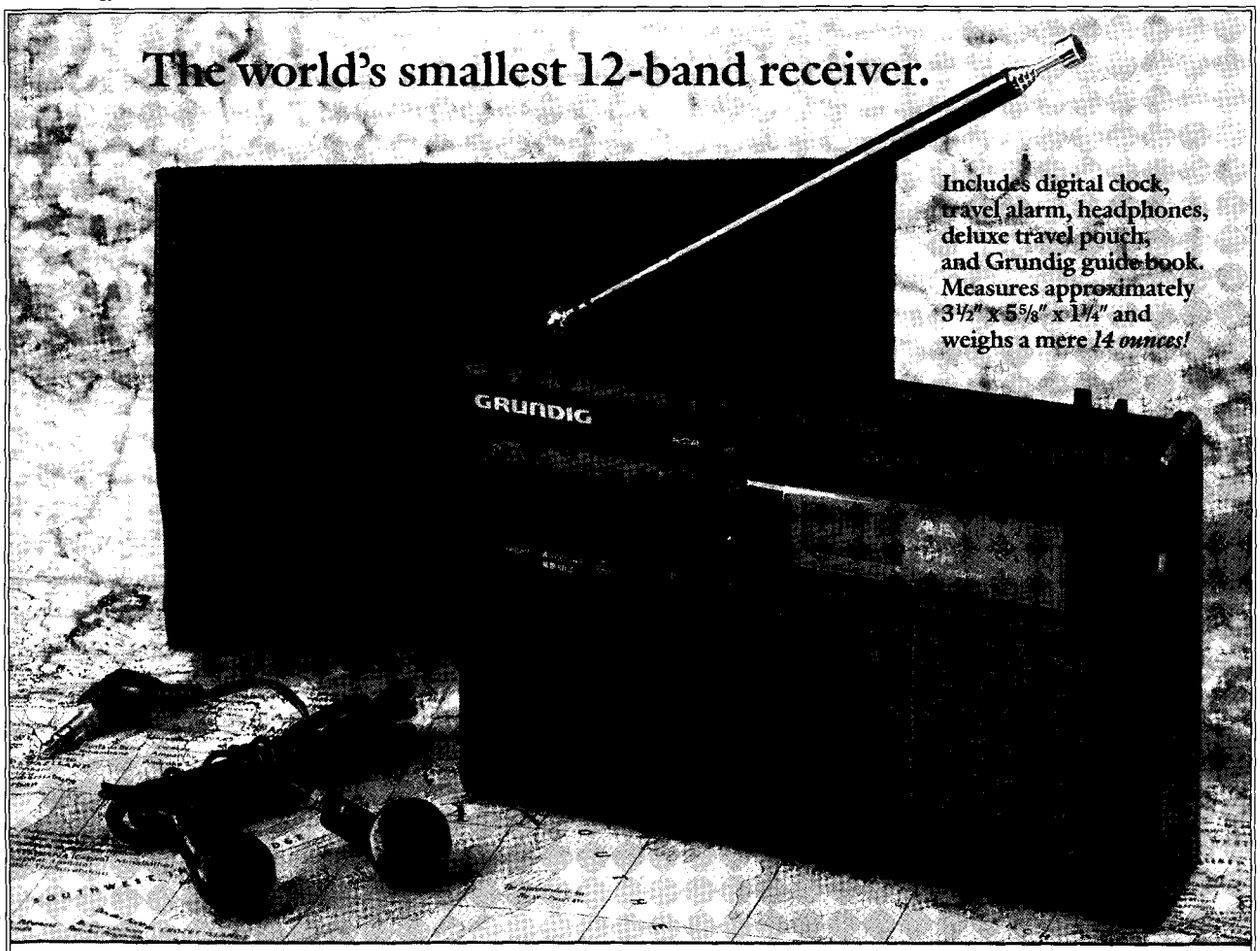

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At the 1984 convention, Cuomo's keynote speech instantly elevated him into party savior, whose coming could be brought only by sufficient prayer of the faithful. He had momentarily dropped into a demoralized party whose nominee was gasping for life. Cuomo's speech—a "Tale of Two Cities"—divided America into two classes, the rich and poor. He defined the middle class in resentful, anti-modern terms: "The middle class, those people who work for a living because they have to, not because some psychiatrist told them it was a convenient way to fill the interval between birth and eternity." By enunciating the credo and swiftly departing, Cuomo had set himself apart as a spiritual figure. From then on, he was begged to run, his frequent exhibitions of reluctance only stimulating the pleadings. His moment may well have been 1988, but he left the race to the technocratic Michael Dukakis, a much more assimilated figure, who unconvincingly tried to present himself as a character out of *Moonstruck*, in the Cuomo image.

The mugging of Dukakis seemed to prepare the Democrats for Mario Cuomo. They liked to imagine him striding onto the debate stage with George Bush carrying a baseball bat. His enormous, obvious weaknesses did not dim the feeling for his candidacy. In any other figure his titanic flaws would have been cement shoes. But Cuomo's unsurpassed rhetorical skill and combativeness—his sweep of intellect and street-wise menace—attracted a following that did not disperse even after his refusal to run.

But soon after his withdrawal, Cuomo was in the game. In the now-infamous Gennifer Flowers tapes, Flowers raised Cuomo's name: "I wouldn't be surprised if he didn't have some Mafioso major connections." Clinton, who later claimed he was trying to assuage an unstable threat, replied: "Well, he acts like one." Clinton apologized. Cuomo exploded. On "Larry King Live," on January 29, he unleashed his rage: "It involves all Italian-Americans and, much more than that, it involves all the people who have ever been slurred—all the Jews and all the Polish people and all the minority groups and all the women and all the welfare people—all those people who, when you're in trouble in this country, you tend to scapegoat; all that cheap living room talk when the 'other group' isn't there; all that 'nigger' talk...."

With the New Hampshire primary in full swing, on February 13, Mario Cuomo made a border raid. At the Kennedy School, the faculty and graduate students hung from the rafters and on every word. It was as close to a campaign appearance as Cuomo would ever make. The subject was ostensibly welfare; the stated target was ostensibly the Republican president; the subtext was Bill Clinton, who has argued for welfare reform. The speech was mostly composed of arias from Cuomo's repertoire: "The Republicans are masters of diversionary tactics." And: "Instead of a blueprint, [Bush] has given the nation a few delicious but meager bonbons." (In fact, Cuomo's Harvard speech had no specifics on welfare reform; it was itself a delicious but meager bonbon.) Cuomo could not have had a more fawning audience than the Harvardians. Questioner after questioner begged him to enter the race as the only one who could rescue the party. He declined to quell the write-in effort in New Hampshire on his behalf. "They're saying lousy things about me in my own state. If someone wants to say nice things about me in New Hampshire, I'm not going to discourage it."

But what was filling for Harvard felt empty in New Hampshire. And what Cuomo did not understand was that he was not perpetuating his artful dodging. By declining to shut down the write-in operation, he put himself in the race. But by not entering in earnest, the voters resented his disingenuousness. His negative rating in the polls climbed higher than any other Democrat in the primary. On election day, he won 3 percent.

Cuomo's intent to armor himself from the rigors of the campaign caused him to suffer from them. His moral vanity may be left intact, but not his promise for the Democrats. They had been led to believe that he was a man who understood power. His coyness over the years may have sprung from his instinct for self-preservation, but his self-absorption ultimately distracted him. He has returned to his village, where he is again enveloped in parochial battle, violently feuding with Senator Al D'Amato, the last major New York politician with whom he did not have strained relations and with whom he had previously had a political concordance. Now he can await the New York primary, when the presidential campaign will parade through his neighborhood and he can play his traditional role, belittling by belittling or belittling by praise. But his own aura of possibility, which accounted for much of his power, is gone. What he has exposed by his noncandidacy is that he is not the prince who can ride fortune. What he has injured is his pride. What he has lost is the last chance in his political career. •

Paul Tsongas's foreign policy record.

PUNCH-PULLER

By Morton Kondracke

Paul Tsongas's campaign manifesto, "A Call to Economic Arms," is replete with violent metaphors. "Today our economic enemies are our political friends," he writes. "The war they wage is in the marketplace, not on the battlefield." "Our companies are going forth to do one-on-one battle and are being mugged" by competitors "aided by governments that aggressively seek out the advantages of uneven playing fields wherever possible." As a result,

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the U.S. economy is "under siege" and its way of life is "in peril."

Despite the life-and-death rhetoric, however, Tsongas's means of fighting back are strangely mild, especially toward our "economic enemies." He calls for targeted tax cuts to help U.S. corporations, partnerships between government and business, and "economic loyalty" on the part of American consumers, who should regard buying a foreign car as the moral equivalent of sending money to the Soviet Union in the midst of the cold war. Though Americans are being "mugged," Tsongas's manifesto calls for no action against the muggers save "to criticize them when their policies are in error." He calls for no sanctions, no threats, no "bashing." In one recent candidates' debate, when pressed on what tough action he might take against Japanese trade restrictions, Tsongas said the strongest action he could take would be to tell the American people Japan had not been fair and ask them to "understand that in your consumer purchases."

Tsongas's eschewal of protectionism is a relief; but his reluctance to use presidential power against foreign powers in geoeconomics is unfortunately mirrored in geopolitics. In virtually every case when America came in conflict with an adversary during his career, Tsongas found that this country was somehow to blame. And in virtually every case when the United States faced the choice of using or threatening military force, Tsongas was opposed to it.

Fellow Massachusetts Democrats say Tsongas is not as non-combative as Michael Dukakis of Brookline. "I am not a suburbanite," says Tsongas himself as he points to Lowell, where he grew up: a gritty machine town, where he had to fight entrenched anti-reform interests to make it onto the city council and then the Middlesex County Council. But since his election to Congress in 1974, he has never had to fight a dirty campaign and never waged one. Watergate did in his first opponent, Paul Cronin. In 1978 he faced a multi-candidate primary field for the U.S. Senate, and won because he had a superior handle on federal issues.

On policy he has stuck to his guns: a long-time advocate of corporate subsidies, in 1980 he gutsily told the Americans for Democratic Action that they had to help—not oppose—private business. He's also tackled fellow liberals on nuclear power and middle-class tax cuts. But these are the exceptions and not the rule. (Tsongas's ADA approval rating, for example, was still an average 85.8 percent in his Senate career.) And conflict-aversion is Tsongas's instinct. As his campaign ads show, Tsongas's sport is swimming—a "solitary, self-dependent" activity, as he once described it—where victory depends on improving one's own performance, not blocking or tackling an opponent. It's also not a team sport requiring him to lead others by force of personality as well as ideas.

It's in foreign affairs that his conflict-aversion is most striking. During his term in the Senate, Tsongas became one of the foremost opponents of President Reagan's Central American policy and a leading advocate of a nuclear freeze with the USSR. He's no pacifist and never succumbed to the illusion that the United States and the Soviet Union were morally equivalent. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, he supported arms aid to the Afghan rebels, and in his 1981 book, *The Road from Here,* he describes the Soviets as cynical and threatening. As a representative in the mid-1970s, he joined fellow liberals in slashing the defense budget but refused to go along with colleagues who wanted to pull U.S. forces out of Europe.

Still, arguing in 1980 for aid to the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, Tsongas declared that "Castro is in power today because we isolated him and gave him no choice but to turn to the Soviets." The United States faced anti-American regimes in Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Iran, he said, because it backed right-wing dictators beforehand. In an interview, he told me he believes the same today. He also argued in his book that Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam turned to the Soviets because the United States refused him military aid.

Tsongas argued against the invasion of Grenada because he said he didn't believe U.S. medical students there were truly in danger. He opposed the contras as "terrorists" and, while not endorsing the Sandinistas, predicted they would remain in power "for a long time" because they had the support of their people and called on the United States to make an accommodation with them. He urged a negotiated settlement between Communist FMLN guerrillas and the government of El Salvador in 1983 even though, at the time, the FMLN was still bent on a takeover of the country.

Tsongas opposed Reagan's defense buildup and Star Wars because he said he feared U.S. aggressiveness would help the Soviets succeed in wooing Western Europe into neutrality. Actually, in 1984, when Germany voted to deploy U.S. nuclear missiles, the Soviets returned to arms talks they'd previously walked out of. Tsongas now admits, "Reagan's 'evil empire' mindset made the Soviets wary of what we might do."

President Bush's invasion of Panama, Tsongas says, was "probably justified, given what Noriega was doing." (Tsongas favors the death penalty for large-scale drug dealers, though not for murderers.) He told me: "I'm troubled by the instinct of Republicans to use force automatically," but said he understands the principle that "you have to be willing to use force sometimes, or else your adversaries take advantage of you." In the Gulf, he says, he would have voted with fellow Democrats to give more time for economic sanctions to weaken Saddam Hussein, but would have used force if sanctions had not succeeded. He does not rule out force "as a final resort" if other means are unsuccessful in curtailing Iraq's nuclear program.

"I am not an attacker. I'm a counterpuncher," Tsongas said. "I'll give people reasonable running room, but if they hit, you have to hit back. Otherwise the judgment gets made that you're not tough." Tsongas denies that such a judgment should be made

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about him, and points to his post-Senate experience on Cape Cod, where as chairman of a study commission on the environment he won limits on development by threatening a moratorium on all new construction. It's not an argument that would have Saddam Hussein quaking in his boots. •

PORT-AU-PRINCE POSTCARD

'BACKERS'

By Anna Husarska

The gangplank between the handsome white U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Mohawk* and the black, stinking, oil-covered pier in Port-au-Prince is a short road from potential heaven to potential hell. Three times a week, two cutters like the *Mohawk* return some 500 Haitians, plucked from the sea while trying to make it to the United States.

From my room in the Hotel Oloffson I can see the cutters coming in the morning with new loads of unwanted refugees. I spend the day on field trips or speaking with human rights activists, priests, local journalists, and European diplomats about the repatriation and about the lawlessness in Haiti. In the evenings I hear gunshots.

The port scene is always the same. In total silence, resigned Haitians—perhaps a fifth of them under the age of 10—walk sheepishly down the gangplank past American and Haitian officials supervising the operation. Women carrying bulky transparent plastic bags on their heads look around fearfully. The men put on defiant faces and carry their possessions in pink Huggies diaper-wrappers (gifts from their stay at the Guantánamo military base in Cuba). Some also clutch hardcover books published by Macmillan ("Music" or "Art") given them at the base. The Huggies bags and the cardboard boxes with the inscription "Meal Ready to Eat" (another Guantánamo souvenir) are the insignia of the returnees—or "backers," as journalists call them.

All returnees are handed a yellow card by the Haitian Red Cross. It theoretically entitles them to one ration of basic foodstuffs: rice, beans, sugar, cooking oil. (Like the Huggies bags, the yellow cards are a kind of stigma, evidence of attempted getaway, though in time they will probably be traded on the black market and lose any relevance.) A hundred yards from the gangplank, under the now-mocking sign "Welcome to Haiti," in a round-roofed kiosk, they take their turn standing in three separate lines. In the meantime the Coast Guard has distributed to the Haitian authorities a dozen sets of neatly stapled computer printouts listing their names.

The first Haitian-manned line is for basic data (name, marital status, age, place of residence, and the amount spent on the trip). Why do the Haitian authorities ask these questions? "You know, this is a very special sociological phenomenon," explains one of the Haitian officers. "Not political?" "Oh, no, those people leave because they want to go to Florida. This has nothing to do with politics."

The other two lines involve fingerprinting. In one the fingerprints, in red ink, are used as a signature to confirm the receipt of seventy-five gourdes ($15 at the official rate, $10 on the black market) from the Red Cross. In the other line the real fingerprinting takes place. It is a laborious process that brings to mind gangster movies, not social science. It takes a while for these people, surrounded by uniformed and plainclothes police, to relax their wrists and hands enough so that the officer can smudge their ten fingers in black ink and stamp a white sheet. Fingerprinting of small children by the Haitian police was abandoned after pictures of this procedure were published.

The press, in inimitable fashion, went on a mistreated-returnee hunt. A seasoned journalist observed sardonically that one forcibly repatriated and beaten Haitian is worth more than a dozen who were beaten but never took the boat. Unfortunately, stable terror is old news; forced repatriation is new news. "This whole thing stinks. Here you have politics prevailing over humanity. It is simply realpolitik," Father Antoine Adrien, a priest who returned to Haiti after twelve years in Brooklyn, told me. He is outraged that there is no respect for law in his country and that even "some old-fashioned rules" are not enforced. He offers the example of a deputy, Michel Adelson, recently detained by soldiers. When he invoked his immunity as a member of the Parliament, they asked him for his army registration ID, the only one they apparently respect.

Some abuses committed in Port-au-Prince are reported by the local press, radio, and television. Some are actually *sung* on Radio Enriquillo from the Dominican Republic, because although news broadcasts in Creole are forbidden, the music programs aren't. I would call these abuses random intimidation rather than systematic repression: a progressive priest, Yvon Massac, held for a few days in the Pénitencier National for allegedly not paying his debt to the cement factory; two deputies from deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's party stopped by armed men outside the Presidential Palace; police surrounding the Holiday Inn, where a meeting of opposition politicians is held.

The countryside, too, though far from a safe haven, is prone less to systematic elimination of political adversaries than to revenge and banditry on the part of corrupt sheriffs, who lost their grip on the local population after Aristide came to power and are now back running their fiefdoms.

Many supporters of Aristide have been among the victims, but this is partly because 67 percent voted for him. Immediately after the September 30 military coup they were sought after, but now it is more like arbitrary bully-

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Can Pizzas Hook Them on *Hamlet?*

By Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers

Usually, when we talk about changing the way people behave, we also talk about changing incentives. If we want motorists to conserve gas, we consider raising gas prices. If we want to encourage welfare families to stay together, we discuss changes in welfare rules. Most U.S. high school students have little incentive to work hard and get good grades, and some school districts have begun trying to change this by offering rewards and prizes for kids who improve their school performance.

A couple of months ago, I heard a school administrator describe his school's incentive program on the radio. The school offered all kinds of prizes for getting good grades and coming to school regularly. There was even a new car, donated by a local dealer, that would go to a student with good attendance—and the lucky number in the incentive program's car lottery. The program was relatively new, but the administrator said attendance had improved. He was hopeful that kids would get excited about learning, too. But on the same show, a critic called the school's incentive program "desperate and sad." Many people would agree with him.

People who are offended by extrinsic incentives like cars or pizza parties say they are nothing more than bribes that reward kids for doing what they are supposed to do anyway. People also object on practical grounds: They think prizes for performance won't work—at least not in the long run. Once the pizzas with double cheese stop coming, youngsters will stop reading Dickens or working on their science projects. The incentives won't change their attitude toward schoolwork.

People who are offended by incentives like cars and pizza parties say they are simply bribes.

These objections ignore a lot of experience we've already had with using incentives to motivate young people. When I was a kid, my parents offered me incentives—like stamps for my album—to encourage me to study hard and get good grades. There was a different incentive every report period; and my parents also told me I'd be deprived of something if my grades weren't good. Bribery? Sure, but parents have been getting good results with it for years. Often kids who have to be bribed end up getting hooked on reading or chemistry or playing the piano.

Those who say that reading will stop when the pizza does may be wrong. Some jobs are inherently unpleasant. Suppose you offer incentives to increase the number of tons of garbage your workers move each day. If the extrinsic incentives are attractive enough, workers will move more garbage. But the moment you reduce the incentives, the tonnage will be back where it was. On the other hand, if you offer incentives to people who read poorly, these incentives might get many of them to the point where they read well and enjoy reading. And they won't need sticks or carrots anymore.

So there are two questions to ask about incentives. Is what we're trying to get people to do enjoyable enough so that, once they reach a certain level, they will need no further incentives? When we're talking about what kids are supposed to learn in school, the answer is, or should be, *yes*. The second question is, does the incentive work? Will it really get kids to work harder and learn more?

Some incentives that we think will work don't. A couple of years ago, people in West Virginia decided to attack their dropout problem by lifting the driver's licenses of kids who left school. They reasoned that young people would be very eager to hang on to their licenses, and this would be an incentive to stay in school until they graduated.

The first year, the results looked good—nearly 33 percent fewer students dropped out than had the previous year. But the second year, the number of dropouts increased by the same percentage. When Rutgers sociologists Jackson Toby and David Armor asked why, they found that the first year was a fluke; the majority of potential dropouts did not even have driver's licenses. Also, Toby and Armor decided, the ones who did probably thought staying in school was worse than losing their license.

On the other hand, a high school in Michigan that has had an elaborate system of incentives in place since 1989 reports that its program has been very successful. ACT scores have increased 12 percent; average daily attendance has increased 6 percent; and the number of students sent to the principal's office to be disciplined has declined an amazing 60 percent. An administrator who is quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* (January 29, 1992) says that the incentives have led to a big improvement in the school's atmosphere: "Three years ago, this was an intimidating place to be. Now there's a sense of pride and security. Now students want to be here and feel they're not losers."

Figuring out which incentives will work is not easy, and it often takes time. Different incentives work in different situations. The driver's license scheme that failed in West Virginia might succeed elsewhere—where more kids on the borderline had driver's licenses. And different incentives work for different people, which may explain why parents, who can tailor incentives to their children's likes and dislikes, are often successful. Also, some incentives work for a while and then stop working. Students in that Michigan school may tire of the prizes they are being offered, and if the people in charge want to keep them motivated, they may have to devise a new array of incentives.

Some people are all for the idea of offering kids a free school jacket in return for trying harder in school; other people are outraged. But successful incentives take many different forms. We should be encouraging schools to experiment with incentives, not rejecting their efforts before we can see if they work.

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ing, a madness with no method, a protection racket. In Pont Sondé, seventy miles north of Port-au-Prince, a group of men who are in hiding told me these two stories:

A certain San Osnak, a tire repairman and supporter of Aristide, was arrested on December 14. A commandant from the barracks wanted his tire repaired. Osnak charged fifteen gourdes, but the commandant was ready to pay only ten. The commandant accused Osnak of being a criminal, the man was detained for twenty-eight days and beaten while in prison. Two weeks later in the same village, another supporter of Aristide, Hector Sama, was arrested. He had gotten a woman pregnant whom a sheriff's aide had his eye on. The girl went to live with the aide, then returned to Hector. The aide got angry and arrested Hector, accusing him of forging a ticket for *borlette*, a popular lottery. In detention Hector was severely beaten, his arm was broken, and upon release he went into hiding.

I was also told of a man persecuted because he had painted electoral propaganda drawings for Aristide in the past. Many of these signs can still be seen around: elaborate, colorful paintings of roosters (Aristide's trademark), the Haitian flag, portraits of Aristide, electoral slogans. New ones, obviously written hurriedly and surreptitiously, are done in a sort of shorthand: "VIV TITID" (Long live Aristide). Opponents of the deposed president shun the diminutive form and write *"aba aristide assassin."* "*Aba*" is Creole for "down with," and in graffiti next to the airport one sees, "*aba ambago.*"

I discussed the embargo and the negotiations in Washington between Haitian legislators and President Aristide with a young Haitian while watching yet another cutter come in. "If Aristide does not come back, this country will be dead," he said sadly. After a moment he added: "But then, if Aristide comes back, *he* will be dead."

ANNA HUSARSKA, a frequent TNR contributor, is a fellow at the School of Public Affairs at the University of Maryland.

Yeltsin and the KGB.

SPOOKED

By Paul Quinn-Judge

Looming imposingly over the speaker's lectern at the Russian Parliament, Viktor Barannikov, the newly appointed minister of security, protested that totalitarianism had been given a bad press. Only 3.8 million people had been arrested by the security organs in the seventy-two years of Soviet rule, he told a recent Russian parliamentary hearing on the role of the KGB during the August coup. "One can scarcely talk about total surveillance or an all-embracing political police" during the Soviet period, he said, a trace of indignation in his voice.

This line does not go down well in post-coup Russia. The statistics were not only grossly underestimated, but one speaker from the floor noted that Barannikov was repeating word-for-word a memorandum prepared by one of his predecessors, Vladimir Kryuchkov, chairman of the KGB until last August. Kryuchkov is now awaiting trial for his part in last year's coup.

Barannikov looked slightly hurt by the criticism, but not particularly concerned. He has Boris Yeltsin's ear, according to scuttlebutt. And the parliamentary commission that was giving him a hard time will soon be wound up.

The exchange underlined the deep gap between theory and reality about the State Security in post-totalitarian Russia. The theory is that the KGB has been broken up. It is hemorrhaging secret files, its foreign intelligence operation has collapsed, and its remaining staffers are friendly, slightly wistful eunuchs who offer tours of the Lubyanka for $30.

One KGB colonel has done the rounds in the United States, trying to peddle files for very large amounts and sometimes offering the same exclusive material to several people at once. (According to one explanation of the colonel's activities, he was raising money for a newly formed KGB pension fund.) General Oleg Kalugin, a former high-ranking KGB officer, assured senators recently that intelligence gathering operations in the United States have ground to a halt.

It's all the stuff of which great anecdotes are made, but in fact the KGB is alive and well. It has been renamed, twice. After a few scary months in the hands of Vadim Bakatin, a reformer who seemed genuinely determined to break up the beast, it has acquired in Barannikov a more amenable boss. In all probability it is now growing again, rather than shrinking. And it is showing little embarrassment about its sinister past.

Other changes are cosmetic. Neither the KGB nor its successor has leaked any files of value. But they have destroyed valuable files and are still doing so, allege researchers from the one remaining parliamentary commission investigating the KGB. Last month, for example, correspondence between the KGB and the Communist Party central committee in 1990 and 1991 seems to have been destroyed, according to Victor Kiselev, one of the researchers. And when a group of Russian parliamentarians tried to discover if their phones were still being bugged, they were unable to obtain a straight answer. Journalists of the state Russian Information Agency, a Yeltsin creation that has irritated some members of the new Russian establishment by its independence, say their phones have been bugged recently.

Between September and December 1991 the KGB really did seem under threat. Bakatin came to the KGB

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in the wake of the coup. A former interior minister, dismissed by Gorbachev in late 1990 in a vain effort to placate Communist conservatives, Bakatin had nonetheless remained loyal to the Soviet president. But he also retained a reputation as a radical reformer with an independent streak. When Gorbachev and the leaders of other republics called him in immediately after the coup to discuss heading the KGB, Bakatin says he warned them that they were taking a risk by offering him the job: he thought the KGB should be broken up. "So do it," Yeltsin said.

Bakatin quickly lopped off the KGB's auxiliary bodies—the border troops, its armored divisions, and its enormous communications organization, which handled nearly all state traffic and which on the eve of the coup cut Gorbachev's links with the outside world. In late October 1991 he announced that the KGB's manpower would soon be down to around 40,000. In the future it would concentrate on counterintelligence and organized crime, he said. Though he did not realize it, when he made these predictions Bakatin had less than a month of real working time left as KGB chairman. Officially he lost his job when the Soviet Union was abolished and Yeltsin chose the occasion to replace him with someone more to his taste, Barannikov.

Bakatin himself admitted that he achieved hardly anything during his few months at the top of the security empire. Soon after his removal, he gave an interview to the evening newspaper *Izvestia*. The KGB has not changed, he warned. "I do not think our special services [KGB] have become safe for our citizens."

KGB officers hated Bakatin. The signs are that, with his departure, they have successfully weathered the storm. Security Minister Barannikov, a career policeman, has reportedly asked for the ministry's strength to be boosted to more than 99,000. The parliamentary researchers noticed the difference almost immediately. When they started working in the KGB archives late in 1991, Kiselev recalls, an air of doom still hung over the organization. The officers in charge seemed nervous and keen to help. They would often claim that certain documents were not available—the KGB archives are dispersed in several Russian cities. But their obstructionism was done in a nervous, accommodating style, the researchers say.

By late December procrastination had changed to blunt refusal. The overall mood in the KGB buildings had changed too, Kiselev said. When the researchers had first gone to the headquarters, the cafeteria had been almost empty, its shelves ill-stocked. KGB officials generally had seemed demoralized. Now the building is humming again, and the assortment of food available at the cafeteria is remarkable for these hungry times.

These days the KGB is working under a set of generously phrased "temporary regulations" issued by Yeltsin in January. They give the new security body almost all the powers the old one enjoyed, including the right to conduct "internal political and socioeconomic analysis." And while officially the security organization lost its control over communications, the regulations refer to "participating" in the job of ensuring the security of state communications. A few days before issuing the temporary regulations, Yeltsin signed a decree restoring "until the issuance of new legislation" the tight controls that had existed during the Soviet period over state secrets—a very broadly defined concept.

The question is: Why is Boris Yeltsin, who regularly declares his uncompromising hostility to any return to authoritarianism, doing all this? He undoubtedly feels that in these uncertain times he needs a powerful security structure. The army is breaking up, the officer corps feels bitter and betrayed. Coup rumors surface weekly. Yeltsin supporters and opponents believed unanimously that economic reform would spark violent protest, perhaps widespread unrest. But so far this has not happened, and the army seems to be sinking further into depression rather than on the verge of revolt. People in the streets are unhappy but so far fatalistic about the nightmarish price rises. The government, however, remains jittery. And Yeltsin, like many Russian rulers before him, overawed by the complexities of running this sprawling, restless, and feckless state, is understandably tempted to have a strong security apparatus in place—just in case.

PAUL QUINN-JUDGE is Moscow correspondent of *The Boston Globe*.

Houses of ill repute, cont'd.

BROUGHT TO BOOK

By John Brodie

There was once a time when the reader of a general non-fiction book could rely upon editors and publishers to have made some effort to verify the facts inside the book's covers. No longer. The basic journalistic standards of newspapers and magazines have become old-fashioned in book publishing, where the demand for newsy material and heavy sales now outweighs considerations of integrity and credibility.

The most striking recent example of the change is Random House, which published both Gary Sick's *October Surprise* and Seymour Hersh's *The Samson Option*. Both books, as readers of THE NEW REPUBLIC will know, were widely discredited upon publication. In addition to TNR, *The Sunday Times* of London, ABC News, *Newsweek*, and most recently *The Village Voice* questioned their

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credibility. Based on the fraudulence of Ari Ben-Menashe (an Israeli yarn-spinner both Sick and Hersh used as a key source), critics dismissed the two authors' works. In retrospect, the contents of the books may say less about the supposed existence of an "October Surprise" conspiracy than about the commercial pressures besieging book publishing.

In 1988 Hersh, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House*, was in a similar quandary as Sick, the former National Security Council staff member. Both were in the early stage of research for books on the Iran-contra affair but opted for more scintillating fare: Hersh, Israel's nuclear arsenal; Sick, the October Surprise. Both had seen their previous books miss the best-seller list and fail to recoup their six-figure advances.

Hersh's previous book, *The Target Is Destroyed: What Really Happened to Flight 007 & What America Knew about It*, did not turn up any cloak-and-dagger material. Sick's first book, *All Fall Down: America's Tragic Encounter with Iran*, likewise lacked a sensationalist edge. Columbia Pictures did not option the story for $300,000 as it did with *October Surprise*, nor did the studio attempt to interest Oliver Stone in directing it. Hersh's editor at Random House, Robert Loomis, who also edits such best-selling authors as Neil Sheehan (*A Bright Shining Lie*) and Robert Massie (*Nicholas & Alexandra*), says: "The problem with [Hersh's] *007* book from a commercial point of view is that it said there were no flying saucers."

As late as last winter Hersh's *The Samson Option* still lacked its flying saucer—the alleged links between Robert Maxwell and Israeli intelligence. By the time the author had turned in most of his manuscript, what Random House had was a well-researched history of America's role in the development of Israel's nuclear capability. At this juncture the book did not even mention Maxwell. In publishing circles, word was that Hersh was floundering and that Random House was not thrilled by the promise of another snoozer.

Hersh did not begin seriously interviewing the primary source for the Maxwell chapter until last April—a mere six months before the book's October 20 publication date. Random House must have been relieved finally to have a selling point. Hersh's editor was quoted in *Publisher's Weekly* saying as much. He called the Maxwell chapter "the real story." It was this chapter that was shopped around to magazines; and it was this chapter that got Hersh slapped with a libel suit. Conveniently, Maxwell died two weeks after the book's publication. Hersh is quite forthcoming about the pressure he felt to soup up *The Samson Option*: "My problem is not just writing a book; my problem is finding someone who's going to buy it. The last chapter is hobbled on, because it struck me that no one was going to buy the book . . . unless I broke some news."

Books are normally published nine months after the author's manuscript is submitted. In the case of books with a news peg, a publisher may elect to crash through the process of editing and legal review in three months. Sick's book was originally slated for a January release, yet after he finished the manuscript late last August, Times Books (a Random House imprint) chose to publish it by November.

Publishing houses do not employ fact-checkers as magazines like *Time* do. Accuracy is not a financial concern for a publishing house; libel is. A libel judgment can cost a publisher millions of dollars; an inaccuracy only detracts from a house's reputation. So books are subjected to a legal read, but not a factual review. In America it is increasingly difficult for a plaintiff to win a libel case unless he can prove that a journalist knowingly went out of his way to impugn the plaintiff's reputation. Dead men can't sue. When asked about the accuracy of *The Samson Option* and *October Surprise*, Peter Osnos, the publisher of Times Books and a former *Washington Post* reporter, told PBS's "The Edge": "We, I think, more often than not are able to say that the book is something that represents the reality that the book pretends to be presenting. We are not saying this is gospel; what we're saying is this is the best this writer can do."

If books like *October Surprise* and *The Samson Option* can offer startling new claims, the publisher may also refrain from sending copies to the press until the week of publication. Only high-ranking personnel at newspapers and magazines may read galleys of the books, after signing confidentiality agreements. The release of these "stealth books" then becomes a news event in and of itself. Headlines generate sales, and uncritical coverage in the established press lends an air of validity to the author's allegations. As Harold Evans, publisher of Random House's trade division and former editor of *The Sunday Times* of London, puts it, "Headlines are very important . . . making news is a very important part of it."

The flashpoint for *October Surprise* and *The Samson Option* occurred when Random House and Hersh's British publisher, Faber & Faber, offered the books to *The Sunday Times* and *Newsweek* for uncritical stories or excerpts. Since Maxwell owned the *Times*'s rival publication, *The Sunday Mirror*, Faber & Faber assumed Hersh's allegations would find a quick home there. Alas, at that point, the journalistic standards of newspapers met the standards of book publishers. The *Times*'s chief investigative reporter, Peter Hounam, read the manuscript and voiced serious doubts about Ben-Menashe's and Hersh's credibility. With publication only weeks away, Faber & Faber flew Hersh and his source for a London sit-down with Hounam.

At a late afternoon meeting at the Groucho Club, a Soho haunt frequented by London's literati, Hersh and Ben-Menashe asked Hounam to state his misgivings with *The Samson Option* in the company of a Faber & Faber executive and the house's solicitor. Hounam came to the meeting with a smoking gun Ben-Menashe could not refute.

Israeli documents indicate that Ben-Menashe was indeed at one time a low-level translator for Israeli intelligence. He was indicted in 1990 by the U.S. Attorney's Office for arms trading but was acquitted. While under

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wraps in the Manhattan Correctional Center, he started calling journalists. ABC News subjected him to a lie detector test, which he failed. Over the years he has alternately claimed that he was the commander of the Israeli raid on Entebbe in 1976, that he planted the homing device in the Iraqi nuclear reactor in Osirak just before the Israeli air raid in 1981, and that he was offered the directorship of the Mossad (yet declined the honor). (See "The Conspiracy That Wasn't" by Steven Emerson and Jesse Furman, TNR, November 18, 1991.)

At the Groucho Club, Ben-Menashe described to Hounam how in 1986 he arranged for a photo of a renegade nuclear lab technician to be flown from Israel to London for publication in a newspaper. Hounam knew this was bunk: Hounam had taken the photograph of the lab technician *himself* while in Australia, not Israel. Ben-Menashe was caught in a lie. (When asked about the incident, Hersh told me, "Forget the photograph.") According to Hounam, a quarrel ensued and he left the Groucho, but not before telling Hersh: "Look, this guy has been hoaxing you. You've got to do something about it. The rest of the book is probably very good, but this stuff is crap." Hersh called Hounam later that evening and asked him to come see the documentation that Ben-Menashe had at his hotel room. That night Ben-Menashe and Hersh showed Hounam their documents (a battered suitcase with thousands of papers in disarray), but when Hounam asked to see a complete arms deal from start to finish, Ben-Menashe could not produce a plausible paper trail. Says Hounam, "It is a mystery to me that they went ahead and published that book knowing so much of the material is wrong."

Hersh responds, "It's an argument among journalists." But Hounam feels that Hersh simply has no patience for information that might contradict his theories. Two weeks after *The Samson Option*'s publication, Joe Flynn—a notorious British con man who once sold the *New York Post* a pair of shoes that purportedly belonged to Jimmy Hoffa for £25,000—surfaced and claimed to have been employed by Hersh and his British publisher to dig up dirt on Maxwell. When Hounam tried to play a tape of the con man for Hersh at a Washington meeting, Hounam claims Hersh refused to listen to the recording. In a front-page article, though, which ran in the London *Sunday Times* last November, Hersh said, "I accept it was this man Flynn we were dealing with and that he is a con man."

Back in the states, *The Samson Option* and *October Surprise* ran aground when *Newsweek* began investigating the various charges they raised. On the Thursday prior to *The Samson Option*'s October 20 publication, *Newsweek* was given an advance copy so that its staff could prepare a news story for their Monday issue. An in-house contretemps arose as a result of Maynard Parker, *Newsweek*'s editor, having signed an agreement with the publisher that included a "no report" clause, which means no fact-checking of the book's accusations. Such agreements are standard procedure for the stealth books of major houses such as Random House and Simon and Schuster, but they are basically indefensible efforts to stifle journalistic inquiry. When the writer assigned to cover *The Samson Option* felt uncomfortable lending his name to what he perceived as shoddy reportage by Hersh, he raised his objections with Parker on Friday evening. On Saturday Parker contacted Random's publisher, Evans, and said *Newsweek* could not run a story without at least calling some Israeli officials for denials. As Parker tells it, "Evans hemmed and hawed and said, 'No.' So we said, 'Fine.' And I killed the piece."

The following Monday *Newsweek* published instead a story about Ben-Menashe with the headline: "One Man, Many Tales." The next week it ran "Making of a Myth," which debunked the October Surprise. The piece grew out of a *Newsweek* investigation into whether the October Surprise actually occurred.

Sick claims that *Newsweek* never even looked at his book before the magazine deconstructed the credibility of his sources. Parker remembers differently. He says he read a draft of the book under a confidentiality agreement last summer yet chose not to excerpt it because it was "full of holes." As Parker says, "Sick has gone all around telling journalists that we never read the book. What is true is that reporters working on the story never read the book because of our confidentiality agreement. In fact I read it twice."

The test for whether Random House, Sick, or Hersh deserves consignment to the circle of the fraudulent should be twofold: Was each author straight with his readers? And what steps has each author/publisher taken to avoid or squelch contradictory evidence? Osnos, Sick's publisher, told me, "Gary is neither a scholar nor a journalist," and thus presumably should not be held accountable to the standards of either profession. He was, though, an intelligence officer for more than a decade.

Sick freely admits that his sources are shady. "What if all of these people are lying to me? Is it possible that all of these accounts are themselves a conspiracy of lies?" he wonders in the introduction to his book. But Sick failed to provide his readers with information about the reliability of his sources. For example, on page 142 he writes, "According to Ari Ben-Menashe, Israel was approached in August not only by Casey but also by *officials within the* CIA who encouraged Israel to cooperate with the Republican initiative as a means of freeing the hostages." Sick fails to mention that in the same conversation (as seen in transcripts obtained by TNR) Ben-Menashe claimed his source for the above was former CIA Director Stansfield Turner, *a Carter appointee*—who Ben-Menashe suggested was telling Israel to deal with a Republican candidate. Turner has denied ever meeting Ben-Menashe. Casey, like Maxwell, is fortuitously dead.

When such sources are used in newspapers, higher standards tend to prevail. There are, for example, letters to the editor pages and occasional corrections and

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editor's notes. Since the fall Hersh has been investigating U.S. arms supplies in the Middle East for *The New York Times*, where he's worked on and off since the late '60s. After his most recent front-page article on these matters, an editor's note admitted he had been unfair in his use of "an identified informant [a House Committee investigator] who was himself relying on an anonymous source." Even after *Newsweek* and TNR questioned Ben-Menashe's credibility, Hersh continued using him as a source for his *New York Times* pieces. When I asked Hersh to respond to these criticisms, he said, "You know what, kid? Come around next Tuesday and tie my shoelace."

A reporter for a newspaper *can* walk away from a story that smells fishy. Or a newspaper can relegate a story to its opinion pages, as *The New York Times* has done with the October Surprise. In contrast, the author of an investigative book must forge ahead and try his best to reach a sexy conclusion that will recoup his advance. Random House stands by its authors and points out that the two books have nothing to do with one another since Times Books and Random House are independent imprints within the same publishing house.

When Random House's Evans was asked why in the wake of *The Samson Option* and *October Surprise* anyone should ever again believe a Random House book, he said, "Because you're a person who makes up his own mind and realizes where there's truth, there's heat. And, there's sometimes light." It seems more accurate to say: where there's heat, there are also smoke and mirrors.

JOHN BRODIE is a staff writer at *SPY* magazine.

A reply to Camille Paglia.

FEMINIST FATALE

By Naomi Wolf

When times are such that white male commentators—Patrick Buchanan excepted—can no longer express bigoted beliefs, but not yet such that those impulses don't arise, there is a high demand for court jesters ready to bash their own out-groups. Many of them use a smoke screen of progressive language, from lynching to lesbianism, to pass off their regressive ideas. Camille Paglia's distortion of the relationship between sex and feminism ("The Joy of Presbyterian Sex," TNR, December 2, 1991) is a shining example of this pattern. The nipple-pierced person's Phyllis Schlafly, Paglia poses as a sexual renegade but is in fact the most dutiful of patriarchal daughters. By decorating a stale set of values with the baubles of pop culture and postmodernism, she reassures social conservatives—traditionally the dweebs of the intellectual schoolyard—that to hang out in the rearguard of social change is not uncool after all. The problem is that Paglia manages her task not through verve and style alone, but with the help of a howling intellectual dishonesty. Backlash sensibility has helped her do this in two ways: while it selects her as the only middle-aged female to appear on a magazine cover otherwise devoted to men or to female fashion models, it has also kept the public safely out of contact with actual feminist debate. So Paglia has been at remarkable liberty to misrepresent feminism—most recently in these pages. It is time for the record to be put straight.

Paglia's status as spokeswoman for the anti-feminist backlash is not unprecedented. The end of the nineteenth century saw a surge of feminist activism much like our own, and by the 1890s the "Woman Question" was a burning one. In the face of women agitating for votes, education, and sexual freedom, a growth industry burgeoned, producing highly rewarded—often female—anti-feminist commentators. Paglia's message recapitulates, without irony and sometimes almost word for word, the metaphors and pseudo-scientific sophistries of the last great period of anti-feminism, 1890-1920. Her anti-feminist themes are "new" only insofar as those bombarded with them the first time are conveniently dead.

Paglia's feminists, like the Victorians', are ill-dressed "drabs" and "hangdog dowdies." The late Victorian press bristled with caricatures of suffragettes' dress and appearance, branding them as "she-men," "monsters in bloomers," "hens that crow." Then there is the crisis of sexual failure attributed to women leaving the "separate sphere," the well-documented Edwardian scenario of voracious women and impotent men. Paglia writes: "Once there was the world of men and the world of women. Now the sexes, freely mingling, know each other too well"; they have "come too close" and have "lost their allure." Dr. Arabella Kenealy, an anti-feminist

NAOMI WOLF is the author of *The Beauty Myth* (Morrow).

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polemicist catapulted to fame at the turn of the century, wrote likewise: "Where before [woman's] beauty was suggestive and elusive, now it is defined ... the haze, the elusiveness, the subtle suggestion of the face are gone.... Her voice is louder, her tones are assertive. She says everything—leaves nothing to the imagination."

Paglia's theory of cultural evolution comes straight out of the Edwardian popular press: men build civilization, asserts Paglia, while women—primitive, undifferentiated, essential—"water the ground." According to Winfield Scott Hall, who wrote "Sexual Knowledge" in 1925, "Males were made to 'vary,' that is, to fill a variety of functions in the social division of labor. Females, being more primitive, were non-varying and identical in evolutionary function, and that function was to reproduce." This is a play on Darwin's understanding of the relationship of biological evolution to social hierarchy: "Some of [women's] faculties," he wrote, "are characteristic of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilization." This social Darwinism, discredited beyond repair when it applies to race, is reconjured and reanimated by Paglia to intimidate our thinking about gender.

In Paglia's TNR article, she commits not merely to recycled Darwinism, but to goggling and shameless untruths. "Feminists," she states, want "men and women to be the same." My jaw dropped when I read this. Paglia has been in Philadelphia, not Oz. "Academic feminism" has centered on sexual *difference* for the entire past decade, at least. The landmark theories of "difference" range from the *Ecriture Feminine* of linguist Luce Irigaray to sociologist Carol Gilligan's study of the different moral reasoning of boys and girls to social critic Suzanne Gordon's *Prisoners of Men's Dreams*, which argues that women err by imitating men. A core 1985 anthology of feminist criticism is titled, characteristically enough for the decade, *Making a Difference.*

Paglia romps still further into the rockless pastures of intellectual deception: "There is," she writes, "a century of rich commentary on sex—including important work by such women as Melanie Klein and Karen Horney—that women's studies, mired in the shallow present, ignores." In fact, Klein and Horney are midcentury psychologists of femininity, central to the American feminist canon. I first read them—along with the rest of "a century's rich commentary on sex" that Paglia claims women's studies ignores—in a women's studies course at Yale. It would be difficult to find a women's studies program that does not teach them.

To refute the folly of feminism in struggling for an egalitarian society, Paglia snorts, "Go read *King Lear.*" To rebut critics of patriarchal law, she huffs, "Next read the Oresteia." But for every classical allusion that dismisses feminism's aims, another will endorse them. An early feminist critique of marriage? Milton's *Areopagitica.* An impassioned protest at the sexual double standard? *The Miller's Tale* by tenured woman of color Geoffrey Chaucer. A dissident analysis of the systematic oppression of women? *The Subjection of Women* by that third-rate lesbian writer John Stuart Mill. A cursory look at the Western tradition scores against Paglia more easily than for her: our greatest thinkers, it appears, are natural feminists.

Most slippery of all these arguments is the way Paglia has tried to steal the erotic high ground. She casts feminism as "prudish" and "puritanical," unable to deal with "sexuality outside its feminist frame of reference." She sneers at "feminism, with its solemn Carrie Nation repressiveness." "The feminist" is a mustachioed, loveless composite of Hustler cartoons and frat-boy catcalls, whose role is to peer under bedclothes with a flashlight and a bucket of ice water. This caricature lets Paglia side herself with Madonna, the Stones, and the maligned principle of "sweaty virility."

Now I'm as partial to the principle of sweaty virility as the next girl. But more important, feminism, like no other revolutionary movement except gay liberation, is sparked, driven, and fueled on the combustion of sexual desire. Ever since its first modern stirrings—since the Woman Question swept into the early nineteenth century on the impetus of the sexual anarchism of the Romantic movement—feminism has been a vanguard of sexual ex-stasis. Carrie Nation repression? In the 1890s feminism was the bedmate of the Free Love movement, and Olive Schreiner talked dirty with G.B. Shaw. In America the beautiful, scandalous suffragist Victoria Woodhull ran for president on a platform of erotic liberationism. The 1970s wave of feminism had its path smoothed by its affiliation with the sexual revolution—a "liberated woman" was liberated to swing.

The great feminists have been women of passionate impulses, sensuous beauty, and intense sexual magnetism. Think of Yeats's Maud Gonne, of the Princesse de Clèves; of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Josephine Baker, Colette, and Simone de Beauvoir; of Frida Kahlo, George Eliot with her younger man, George Sand with her transvestism and *scandales*; remember Emma Goldman's erotic correspondence and Germaine Greer's self-portrait of her vulva; think of Edna St. Vincent Millay's well-publicized heterosexual promiscuity ("What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and when / I have forgotten"). Think of Madonna.

Abstract principles can enlist our loyalties, but they can't fire the blood; political commitment often comes from intense physical experience. Many Jewish boys became Zionists not from reading Herzl's biography, but from getting beaten up. Many gay activists, while earnest students of *Bowers* v. *Hardwick*, owe their political energy to an early revelation of sexual bliss. While the rights to vote, be educated, and get equal access to wages and health care all serve as gateways to feminism, the gleaming secret, the unspoken pulse, of feminist commitment is the orgasm. Orgasm is the body's natural call to feminist politics: if being a woman can feel this good, women must be worth something.

I became a feminist because when I was 15, I was given

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the essential feminist gift: a safe loss of virtue unmarked by social ostracism; an orgasm that was pure heat and light, unshadowed by the specter of death from septicemia on a basement gurney. I became a feminist because a kindly young intern in a white lab coat at Planned Parenthood handed me, with no lectures or questions, a rubber disk and a trial-size tube of gel. No one made me sign a release that it would be used for non-threatening, egalitarian, unphallocentric activity. It—and hence my body—were mine to do with what I pl ased. That is feminism, and that's why it's sexy.

By casting "feminists" as "the new sexual commissars," hostile to all delicacies and excesses of the heart, eye, and loins, Paglia performs a useful service to the forces of the anti-feminist backlash. All women have recently gained tiny victories in renegotiating the sexual contract. Though these victories are mostly titular—as we saw from the treatment of Anita Hill and Patricia Bowman—society is shuddering and stamping nonetheless, like a mastodon that has seen a mouse.

The Wall Street Journal wails, "Is It the End of Love and Laughter?" A *New York Times* editorial accuses anti-rape activists of denying women's sexuality. *Esquire* plans a feature on how campus sex, in the wake of date-rape consciousness, just ain't the same. This mainstream uneasiness is not about the end of sex; it is about the beginning of female sexual entitlement.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

For what has not been named in the debate over sexu l violence is why, truly, we fight it: we do so in order to have sexual pleasure. The right to say no must exist for the right to say yes to have any meaning. Feminists agitate against rape not just because it is a form of violence—but because it is a form of violence that uniquely steals from the survivor her sexual spontaneity and delight. It is to the extent that many feminists love sex that we hate rape.

Paglia sets up her "ecstasy" versus feminist "repressiveness," but the truth goes the other way around. Paradoxically, it is because feminism is about female ecstasy and desire that Paglia's actual repressiveness is so marketable now. The basic principle of social organization is not just who gets power—but who gets pleasure. Paglia extols the Dionysian frenzy of sexual release. But look closer: Who is doing what to whom in that frenzy of hers? Nietzsche defines the Dionysian ecstasy as "complete self-forgetfulness." In blaming young women for date rape, Paglia cuts them out of those who are allowed Nietzsche's "blissful merging." Her version of ecstasy—in which "women are never safe"—collides with a fundamental tenet of Western liberalism. If women are human beings, we Westerners must admit, within our own value system, that your right to your Dionysian ecstasy stops at the point where you try to have it in someone else's orifice against her will.

What Paglia offers is a salve for the intellectually and sexually exhausted. She soothes the mental cowardice of those who cannot bear the rapid, gendered evolution of our time. Her central metaphor says it all: the Dionysian "pain-pleasure continuum" is just a restatement of the same old conventional sado-masochism. Dionysus, let us remember, was torn apart. Paglia's message to women, faced with a mass culture filled with images of bruising misogyny, is: relax and enjoy it.

Paglia paraphrases rock 'n' roll to give her old-time repressiveness some steam heat. But in our postmodern air there are many frequencies. My radio is picking up on new music: it is raunchy, witty, crashing, humming, flirting, roaring. These songs are about women, and nothing like them has ever been sung before. These songs make some people nervous. Salt n' Peppa are singing: "Give me that driving satisfaction. Give me that positive reaction." Michelle Shocked is murmuring: "If love were a train, I think I would ride me a slow one." And Billy Idol is belting out a mixture of admiration and fear: "Through the midnight hours—she wants more, more, more. With a rebel yell—more, more, more." It is those songs that provoke Paglia's reactionary white noise. But they're coming through anyway, through the static—urgent and scary and sweet. That's what my radio plays. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Different Climates

To some nineteenth-century Anglophone writers, the romantic land of passion and trial was Italy. Hawthorne, Browning, and James are among those who thought that the mores and the emotional depths of their cultures were put to the test in Italy. For us, Italy may have become the source of Armani and high cuisine, but for them, it was a furnace where primal flame burned through figurative and sometimes literal corsets.

No twentieth-century writer more fully subscribed to that view than E. M. Forster, a fact emphasized by the film just made from **Where Angels Fear To Tread** (Fine Line). This novel, Forster's first (1905), is almost diagrammatic in its contrastings of England and Italy, of upper-middle-class English decorum and indecorous, unbuttoned Italians; and the screenplay, by Tim Sullivan and Derek Granger and Charles Sturridge (who directed), is faithful to this scheme.

But once again, in the adapting of novels to films, fidelity is not necessarily helpful. The basic trouble here, to put it elementarily, is that a film is not a novel. The quintessence of Forster's method is that his story progresses from propriety to melodrama—ending in a baby-stealing episode that is right out of mid-Victorian theater—and that he tells it all in a calm, wry, shrewdly observant manner. The tone contrasts comically and sometimes poignantly with the tale. It's as if the contrast between Italy and England *within* the story were mirrored in the contrast between the story and the voice of the narrator.

Now this contrast, between story and narrative tone, is precisely what the film does not capture—probably no film could. Sturridge directed *A Handful of Dust* and came respectably near the Waugh texture, but this was in some degree easier because the tone of Waugh's dialogue is fairly close to the tone of the book as a whole. If the actors merely speak Waugh's lines, they achieve at least something of the flavor of Waugh's novel. This is not true of Forster's book. Forster doesn't envy his characters, as Waugh does: he reveals them. Plucked from their context, they leave the novel far behind, especially that essential contrast between them and their prose environment.

Sturridge makes it worse. The story's initial situation is complicated, and the screenplay doesn't clarify it quickly. Lilia (played by Helen Mirren) is a widow, close to her ex-mother-in-law, Mrs. Herriton (Barbara Jefford), and the Herriton children (Rupert Graves and Judy Davis). Lilia, leaving her own small daughter with Mrs. Herriton, visits Italy with a friend, Caroline (Helena Bonham Carter). It takes too long to understand Lilia's relationship to the Herritons, and the film *never* clarifies who Caroline is. More: some of the dialogue is spoken incomprehensibly—Sturridge knows it so well that he hasn't always been able to tell when it is mumbled—so this picture has its share of murk. Michael Coulter's camera seems commissioned to underscore the murk with a dark palette, in England and abroad.

When Lilia sends word of her engagement to a young Italian in the Tuscan town where she is staying, Mrs. Herriton dispatches her son to rescue her from Italian wiles. Too late. Lilia is already married. Subsequently, after Lilia dies in childbirth, Mrs. Herriton sends both son and daughter to get the child and bring it back for a proper English upbringing—something Caroline also wants to do. The climax, an unhappy accident, is treated by Forster with tact and by Sturridge with clumsiness.

That excellent actress Judy Davis unwittingly highlights the difficulty of filming this book. Her role, the frustrated, frightened, imperious Harriet Herriton, is written full out by Forster. "Snarling," "screamed," "violent" are some of the terms he uses about Harriet, and Davis fulfills them. But that's exactly what's wrong. In the novel Harriet's screaming is contained within its Forsterian ambience; in the film, without the ambience, the screaming seems out of scale. It's not Davis's fault: she is doing what Forster says. But he didn't write Harriet's words to be spoken aloud, bereft of their prose context.

Graves, who was in *A Handful of Dust*, does much better as her brother, conveying the melting of adenoidal northern stuffiness by Italian warmth, but his role is much more congenially transportable from page to screen. Bonham Carter is chiefly successful at defining the class to which Caroline belongs and

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Bugsy. *Warren Beatty (pretty strong) and Annette Bening (stronger) play out the doomed romance of Bugsy Siegel and his light o' love in a context of crime and killing. Some 1940s gangster vitality. (Reviewed 12/23&30/91)* **Daughters of the Dust.** *A visual ballad of the movement of Gullah blacks from the Sea Islands to the North in 1902. Julie Dash, writer and director, could have been more concise, but she is quite clearly a true talent. (2/10/92)* **JFK.** *Historically fantastic, Oliver Stone's rendition of the assassination nonetheless touches some deep dread and worry in this country. And it is a bitter, if farfetched, protest against Vietnam. (1/27/92)* **35 Up.** *Every seven years Michael Apted, the English director, shoots film of a group of English people. They were aged 7 when he started, and the end of this fascinating series is not in sight. (2/17/92)* **—SK**

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which means so much to her. Giovanni Guidelli, as Lilia's husband, hardly seems the best choice among young Italian actors to suggest a blend of charm, sex, innocence, and guile.

Zhang Yimou is the Chinese director who is getting more attention in this country (it's safe to say) than any other Chinese director has ever had. The Asia Society in New York is doing a Zhang retrospective, dealing with his achievements as cinematographer, actor, and director. Two of his films have been released here, and now comes a third. All three deal with a young woman's struggle against circumstances: in *Red Sorghum* as a battler for selfhood in the turbulent 1930s, in *Ju Dou* as the 1920s wife of an old man who wants a son, and now in **Raise the Red Lantern** (Orion Classics) as the fourth wife of a wealthy man in the 1920s who fights her unhappy fate and who suffers the consequences.

The title describes what happens when the husband chooses which of his wives he is going to sleep with that night: lanterns are raised outside her quarters. It's a palatial establishment with virtually separate houses for each of the wives. The story proceeds at a leisurely pace, made to seem even more so because the outcome is foreseeable early. Presumably the cultural details and references are what enrich the film for a Chinese viewer, but they were lost on me.

Zhang knows a great deal about filmmaking, but there is a stolidity in his work that intervenes between us and what is supposed to move us. He loves symmetry: he repeats and repeats symmetrically framed shots in a way that stifles whatever personality he has to express.

The most interesting shot is the very first. Gong Li, the talented young woman who has played the lead in all three of his films, faces the camera while an offscreen voice tells her that she is to be married to the rich man. Without any cutaway, with the camera holding right on her, Gong Li produces tears on cue. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

An Embarrassment of Riches

Even before the disappearance of competing New York newspapers, *The New York Times* played an important role in the success or failure of Broadway plays. For the past twenty-five years, however, the *Times* has played virtually the only role. And for eleven of those twenty-five years, this respected organ of the press has not only been adjudicating Broadway hits and flops, but strongly influencing the aesthetic direction, the artistic personnel, the style, and the content of American theater—not only in New York but (now that resident theaters are trying out so many New York-bound plays) throughout much of the country.

These eleven years have marked the reign of Frank Rich. And although it is not fair to hold one man accountable for the dwindling number and the diminishing quality of plays and productions, there is almost universal agreement that a causal link exists between Rich's dramatic opinions and the crisis in the American theater. Rich has defended himself against such charges by saying, with considerable disingenuousness, that producers, not critics, are responsible for closing plays. But his leverage has grown so potent that it is being noticed even by the mass media. A whole section of "60 Minutes" was devoted last year to Rich's reputation as the "Butcher of Broadway." (Only a handful of his victims were sufficiently unintimidated to speak for the record, though scores more were willing to testify off-camera.)

How did one man achieve such power? And what, if anything, can be done to mitigate the disproportionate influence of *The New York Times* on the American stage? The answers to the first question are complicated and diverse. First of all, the *Times*, largely because of the respect long enjoyed by its most celebrated drama critic, Brooks Atkinson, has always been a major player in the Broadway sweepstakes. Tacitly acknowledging that role, its editors in the late '60s began to feature a second reviewer in their Sunday "Arts and Leisure" section, first Walter Kerr, then Benedict Nightingale, now David Richards. But despite the qualifications of those Sunday critics (and Kerr and Nightingale were generally considered more knowledgeable and thoughtful than most of Rich's predecessors), the daily reviewers

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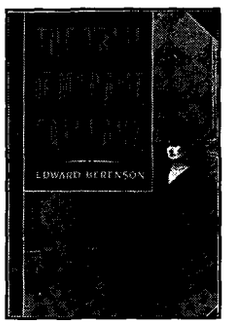

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continued to wield decisive control over the New York stage. Even the highly respected Kerr, a hugely influential figure as a daily reviewer, was virtually disempowered when he voluntarily moved to "Arts and Leisure." New York theatergoers, battered by rising ticket prices and accustomed to overnight opinions, had been conditioned to follow the advice of whoever occupied the first-string critic's chair.

In the case of Rich, the issue is not the quality of his writing. He is an elegant stylist with a lively, witty, urbane mind. Indeed, his literary competence has been responsible for exacerbating the problem, since it has helped to enhance his position with his editors and his readers. It is true that his lacerating style more often resembles the machete wielding of John Simon than the benevolent advisory caresses of Atkinson, but he is not the first to make the wounding of theater people a source of gladiatorial entertainment. Actually Rich, a mild-mannered man in public, seems to have grown more gentle in his writing since samples of his bile were read aloud on "60 Minutes," and he is generous enough about establishing new stars and potential playwrighting talent.

Whatever his mood, in my opinion, Rich's taste is essentially safe, middle of the road, and consumer-oriented. (He was nurtured, as he admits, on Broadway musicals.) I don't much like his limited aesthetic or his ignorance of process or his disregard for advanced theater or his indifference to the classics or his infatuation with glamour. Still, critical disagreements are not the main issue. Everybody has the right to opinions, and at least Rich commendably refuses to fudge on his. No, none of Rich's failings suggests a fatal weakness. The problem is not with his style or his tone or his taste; the problem is rather his influence, the fact that his opinion is the *only* ruling opinion in New York. I have often thought of Rich as a competent critic in the wrong place. Without the clout of the *Times*, he might have been a welcome, even admired, presence. As any critic would be in the powerful chair he now occupies, however, he is something of a menace.

Unlike books and movies, theater does not often survive its critics, though Rich's influence does not always extend to the big critic-proof shows. Andrew Lloyd-Webber's musicals manage to flourish without his approval, and so do such audience-pleasers as *The Secret Garden* and *The Will Rogers Follies*. But the straight plays on Broadway, and particularly in such off-Broadway (and pre-Broadway) venues as the Manhattan Theater Club, Playwrights Horizons, Lincoln Center, Circle Repertory Theater, and others, are almost entirely subject to his tastes.

In *The Seagull*, Treplev calls the stage of his time "conventional and predictable.... When they offer me the same thing over and over in a thousand variations, then I take to my heels and run." He might have been talking about the Rich-influenced "serious" New York theater. *Eastern Standard*, *Marvin's Room*, *Lips Together, Teeth Apart*, and *Falsettos*, among the more recent Rich-approved hits, all have their virtues to a greater or lesser degree. But they are also uniform enough in their middle-class furrow-browed angst, in their guilty perspective on contemporary victimology, in their concentration on mental and physical afflictions, to make one suspect they were stamped from the same cookie-cutter. The fact that these are the approved plays of the '90s, while more radical, controversial, and penetrating works have failed to survive Rich's rancor, suggests that what today passes for serious theater has been shaped by his tastes.

Although it is true that some theater people, such as David Hare, only complain when Rich dislikes their plays (they are happy enough with his praise), many major playwrights and many important auteur-directors either have no place to work in New York anymore or feel unwelcome there. (An alarming number have even left the theater.) JoAnne Akalaitis, who inherited Joe Papp's mantle, has become such a source of unhappiness at the *Times* that her days at the Public may well be numbered. Not only are her productions regularly panned by Rich, but she is regularly assailed in the columns of Rich's wife, Alex Witchel, who now writes the gossipy "On Stage, and Off" column for the Friday paper.

This one-two punch by a husband-and-wife team covering the same art (a collaboration that has been called "an embarrassment of Riches") is a significant element in the growing abuse of power at *The New York Times*—and I'm referring not to nepotism but to the consolidation of opinion. Rich favorites and friends are regularly featured in Witchel's accounts of farewell dinners and television appearances, while Akalaitis is mentioned in these columns only to spank her for canceled productions and declining subscription lists. If Rich scorns the presentations of a new resident company such as the National Actors Theater, Witchel follows up with an unfriendly story about how its director, Tony Randall, is withholding free tickets from 700 Tony voters (which may be the only thing that Randall is doing right). If Rich pans *The Will Rogers Follies*, Witchel notices how a "musical about a man who championed minorities had none in its cast." (Rich later confirms their intellectual compatibility with a note about how "a musical whose democratic hero champions the poor and downtrodden ... opened without a single black performer in its large cast.")

When Rich savages *Nick and Nora*, putting that blighted musical out of its misery the very next day, weeks later he rubs in some salt with a 6,000- or 7,000-word article in "Arts and Leisure," complaining that the producers cheated the "consumer" by selling previews at full price, and, worse, that they prevented him from getting in earlier to close down the box office. I am not arguing that the theater would benefit from long runs of mediocre productions, but rather that there is a distinction between judging the theater and controlling it. It is not enough these days to kill a show at the *Times*. They have to kick the carcass, too.

Rich's *Nick and Nora* article, by the way, is typical of the intellectual level of the once more ambitious "Arts and Leisure." Once engaged with a broad range of theater issues, it is now rife with backstage chatter about profits and losses, costs and overruns, when it is not running front-page articles (by Witchel) about Joan Collins's wrinkled face and wrinkled career. Witchel's Friday columns, usually devoted to green room gossip and professional feuds, are always bursting with statistics (perhaps reflecting her background as a management student at the Yale School of Drama). Nothing impedes her busy abacus—neither personal agreements or unreturned phone calls—so that you are continually being bombarded with irrelevant numbers: the size of Mike Nichols's royalty checks, the cost of moving a show to Broadway, the length of time it takes to recoup investments. Soon, no doubt, we will be given the inseam measurements and arch support size of the latest star.

I guess the *Times* has always been interested in the business of theater. But this is the first time in memory that economics have totally obliterated artistic issues. It has also been traditional *Times* policy to print follow-up features on the playwrights, directors, and actors its critic praises. But I can't remember a time when features have been written to endorse the critic's negative reviews. Witchel even uses "On Stage, and Off" to send ominous signals regarding shows that haven't yet opened. After *Falsettos* received what she, referring to her husband's review, called "raves" in Hartford and was guaranteed success in New York, the show proved unable (because of costs

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and scheduling) to recruit the Rich-sanctioned artistic personnel for its Broadway move. Intimidating rumbles circulated through her column, threatening future disapproval from the critic's seat.

I think it's clear enough that theater opinion at the *Times* has now become a form of overkill, extending from the critic's notice to the features column to the pages of "Arts and Leisure," and even to the *Times* radio station, WQXR, and the *International Herald Tribune* (where Rich repeats his reviews). There are other people reporting on the stage in this newspaper, but none commands a network of the size and power enjoyed by Frank Rich. One suspects that the *Times*, despite its disclaimers, exults in his power, and would not willingly surrender it. But this situation, I believe, is one of the factors helping to destroy the American theater.

The best solution is to demystify the reviewer of *The New York Times*, and this can only be accomplished by adding a second daily voice, perhaps by moving David Richards from the Sunday section, where he has no influence, to a side-by-side position with Rich. A second daily opinion would instantly establish more accountability at the *Times* by reminding us that the theater is subject to a variety of opinions, including the one the reader or the theatergoer holds himself.

This procedure would be consistent, too, with that in other sections of the *Times*, where critics are appointed not as generalists but as specialists in the object under scrutiny. Works by Stravinsky and U2, for example, like books by William Gaddis and Leon Uris, are assigned to differently qualified reviewers, and Vincent Canby shares his reviewing power with Janet Maslin, but the same theater critic usually covers *Miss Saigon* and *Waiting For Godot*.

Still another solution, with which some resident theaters outside New York are experimenting, is to end the debilitating symbiotic relationship between criticism and practice (and theater is the only art that depends so heavily on the press for its survival). This means an end to the use of critics' quotes in ads and the posting of reviews in the lobby, a practice that has encouraged audiences to recognize that they are the best arbiters of their own tastes. If the craven and intimidated New York theater community could stop relying so much on press quotes and newspaper advertising, it might develop theatergoers with the independence to decide things for themselves. Whatever the solution, the stranglehold of *The New York Times*'s critic on American theater must be broken. It is not healthy for artists, not healthy for audiences, not healthy for him. •

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The Feminist Mystique

By Karen Lehrman

Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women by Susan Faludi

(Crown, 552 pp., $24)

Revolution from Within: A Book of Self-Esteem by Gloria Steinem

(Little, Brown, 377 pp., $22.95)

"We intend simply to be ourselves," declared Marie Jenney Howe in the early part of this century. "Not just our little female selves, but our whole big human selves." Howe was the founder of Heterodoxy, a kind of primitive consciousness-raising group in Greenwich Village that demanded only that its members not have orthodox views. Above all, Heterodoxy urged an escape from the cramping classification of "woman," which was being imposed not only by male-dominated society, but also by the "woman movement" of the late nineteenth century. "Woman" was defined by her duties to men, society, God. A feminist's duty, these fiercely individualistic women believed, was primarily to herself.

Heterodoxy deserves to be rescued, especially these days, from the dustbin of history. For in its zeal to abolish women's "little" femaleness, our own women's movement has ended up trapping women in a big femaleness, in a grandiloquent collective identity. Women's ability "simply to be ourselves" has been undermined in the process. But we may again be at the kind of turning point that prompted the birth of Heterodoxy and won it discontented, independent members, eager to pursue the cause of women's equality—on their own terms.

Women (and men) today endorse many or most of the basic goals that belong under the broad banner of feminism: equal job and education opportunities, the same pay for the same work, shared domestic work, access to child care—the prerequisites to overall equality and justice for women. Yet most women (and men) are unlikely to call themselves feminists, to want to be part of any sort of radical, self-conscious movement whose primary purpose is to secure women's rights. The reigning explanation for this discrepancy is summed up in what has suddenly become the feminist buzzword for the 1990s: backlash.

In her best-selling book by that title, Susan Faludi, a reporter for *The Wall Street Journal*, argues that over the past decade women have confronted a concerted cultural and intellectual effort to turn back the progress of women's liberation. She chronicles the daunting extent of the phenomenon, which began with the New Right and now extends into our underwear drawers. The backlash, according to feminists, has succeeded in again turning "feminist" into a dirty word, in making all feminists out to be whiny, shrill, man-hating, ugly.

There is, however, another and contradictory explanation for women's rejection of the label: women believe that they are strong, independent, and can do it all on their own. Or at any rate they believe that the kind of help offered by the organized women's movement is at best beside the point. To some degree this skepticism is a measure of the feminist movement's success. Yet underlying it is a deep discomfort with the orthodoxy of the movement, with a mentality that conceives of only one kind of feminist.

There is equal discomfort with the fundamental tenet that launched the movement in the 1960s: that the "personal is political." In other words, the quest for women's individual advancement does not belong in the private sphere, because for women there is no private sphere: the entirety of our lives has been shaped by political oppression. According to this analysis, the solutions to our problems, from domestic violence to eating disorders, are to be found in society. Ironically, this feminist doctrine has promoted an adversarial stance that has all too often burdened women with precisely the status they have been struggling to escape: the status of victim.

It is also an approach that, in focusing so intently on the public sphere, has tended to ascribe to women goals that they don't necessarily have, and more important, to deny the domestic concerns that they most certainly do have. Concerned about those omissions, such high-profile feminist revisionists as Betty Friedan, Germaine Greer, and Susan Brownmiller, along with "relational" scholars in academia, have offered another explanation of feminism's fading appeal. "First-stage" feminism, they began arguing a decade ago, has run its course, and the time has come to shift to a "second stage," which would correct for the zealous oversimplifications that helped to launch the crusade for women's rights. Women are different from men, they have argued, and there is such a thing as a "woman's sphere," in and through which women can and should exert influence. Taking this line of thought to its extreme, Suzanne Gordon has recently argued in *Prisoners of Men's Dreams* that equal opportunity feminism must be replaced by "transformative feminism": women's goal should be to change capitalism into a system based on caring, not competition.

Now another grande dame of feminism has retreated to the personal realm, in a very different way. In *Revolution from Within: A Book of Self-Esteem*, Gloria Steinem attributes most of women's problems to external factors, but as her title suggests, her cure is internal. In place of the relational feminists' emphasis on distinctively female characteristics, Steinem, like the early feminists, focuses on self-completion, reclaiming women's strong, independent, assertive side. But she too has joined the growing chorus urging that the political be personalized.

Faludi would dismiss these revisionisms as the unwitting product of "backlash," as a sad sort of entrenchment that has emerged from the onslaught by the media, government, and industry on the whole idea of equality for women. And certainly "second-stage" thinking is guilty of treading too close to a pernicious, retrograde view of women (in addition to subscribing to a facile criticism of capitalism). But the mystique of the backlash, and the reception of Faludi's book, which is being hailed as "feminism's new manifesto," are perhaps the best evidence of the limitations of traditional, first-stage feminism. Although Faludi's credo ostensibly endorses individualism and self-assertion—she invokes Nora's declaration in *A Doll's House*, "Before everything else I'm a human being"—the truth is that her book is a good indication of

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how far modern-day feminism has strayed from its classically liberal foundations. The ready embrace of an external enemy, and the insistence on an aggressively collective response to that enemy, may have served the movement well at its origins in the '60s; but the strategy seems to have exhausted its usefulness, not to mention its accuracy as a description of women's predicaments. It has hardened feminism into a rigid orthodoxy that will readily disparage women's free choice if it conflicts with the movement line. And, ironically, it has been destructive not only to women as individuals, but to the cause of true equality.

Faludi's indictment is sweeping: the method of the backlash has been to convince women that feminism has proved to be our own "worst enemy," that too much independence is making women miserable—that all of our problems are, in fact, personal. Her substantiation is equally exhaustive. Case by case, she sets out to show that the backlash has tried to persuade the public that the liberation of women is responsible for female burnout, "toxic" day care, an infertility epidemic, the man shortage, depression, stress-induced disorders (hair loss, bad nerves, alcoholism, heart attacks, anorexia/bulimia, adult acne), and loneliness. Yet "these so-called female crises," writes Faludi, "have had their origins not in the actual conditions of women's lives but rather in a closed system that starts and ends in the media, popular culture, and advertising—an endless feedback loop that perpetuates and exaggerates its own false images of womanhood."

It is not Faludi's evidence—a dizzying array of examples, anecdotes, and studies—that is dubious; it is her argument about the motives that have generated the evidence and the responses that have greeted it. Though her account is full of qualifiers, it is basically a conspiracy theory. Faludi essentially implies that a cabal of villains has been at work successfully intimidating a large class of victims: women.

The book's most solid and disconcerting section is on the media, in which she debunks the myths underlying each of the decade's big trend stories: the man shortage, the infertility epidemic, the mommy track, the day care crisis. Not only was feminism not responsible for the latest "female" problem, but there often was no problem at all. And when there was a problem, it was usually men who were the cause. For example, the "biological clock" crisis was spawned by a study—sponsored by a federation of artificial insemination centers—that looked only at French women who were married to completely sterile men and were trying to get pregnant through artificial insemination; the research scientists never meant the findings to apply to all women. According to sounder studies, Faludi writes, women in their early 30s face only a slightly greater risk of being infertile than women in their early 20s, and the infertility rate is actually lower among college-educated and higher-income women.

When she turns to the entertainment industries, Faludi offers some concrete evidence to support the charge that at least in some cases there has been an explicit agenda at work, and that the agenda is not simply the province of the backwater right. She has unearthed examples of shows being canceled or scripts being rewritten solely to reflect the more "traditional" values of a producer: single women or working women had to be portrayed as evil or miserable, mothers as both good and happy.

Yet it is quite a leap to the conclusion that the (putatively liberal) media as a whole were out to get women during the '80s, that all promotions in the media or on the screen of "family values" stemmed from a sinister sexism. Moreover, Faludi neglects to mention all of the articles inspired by debates over Eurocentrism, date rape, and pornography, which can just as facilely be ascribed to the rise of political correctness that supposedly infiltrated the media at the same time as the backlash.

In any case, an emphasis on "family values" in the second decade of feminism's ascendancy is not all that surprising; nor, for that matter, is the right wing's cynical manipulation of the term. The rise during the 1980s of single-parent families, drug use, violence, and divorce rates made the fate of the family a legitimate concern. And the focus on women's "lifestyle" predicaments doubtless reflects at least in part the rise of women to positions of formative authority in some of the media. To address the tensions that have been one result of women's changing aspirations is hardly an anti-feminist enterprise; to address them superficially, sensationally, misleadingly is hardly a new development in journalism or in Hollywood.

Clearly change has not come painlessly or pervasively, but it is Faludi's implicit expectation that somehow it should have that makes her book disappointingly schematic and off-puttingly defensive. She extends her backlash umbrella over practically every cultural event of the '80s, from Andrew Dice Clay to the relational feminists. Following the traditional feminist impulse, Faludi

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seems to have felt that she needed to exaggerate just how persecuted women are. If you look hard enough, of course, anything can be seen as a reaction to feminism, and Faludi is a good reporter.

Perhaps the best examples of this kind of reductionism lie in her chapters on the fashion and beauty industries—the standard targets of feminist ire. Faludi claims that the "High Femininity" design trend of the '80s was a literal response to the women's movement. Promoting "punitively restrictive clothing" (e.g., miniskirts), designers evidently thought, would not only hamper women's advancement, but force them to buy lots of clothes again: dress them like little girls and they will follow the dictates of fashion. The likelihood that merchandisers were simply responding to a major downturn in the market with a new gimmick apparently eludes her. Instead she herself seems to subscribe to the condescending logic underlying their supposed strategy. In one of her frantic, humorless anxiety attacks about the ominous impact of the trend, she writes: "But was Lacroix offering women 'fun'—or just making fun of them?"

Faludi then devotes six pages to a discussion of the "Intimate Apparel Explosion," as though it could end life in America as we know it. She doesn't like neo-Victorian lingerie (she prefers Jockeys for Her). In fact, she doesn't like neo-Victorian anything, seeing it as yet another way to turn women into brainless statuettes. She lambastes designers who propose that it is good that women feel secure enough to dress in more feminine clothes again.

Whether or not the designers are being sincere, the point is that they are right. Women no longer have to choose between femininity (or sexuality) and equality. But Faludi doesn't seem to get this. "Late-'80s lingerie celebrated the repression, not the flowering, of female sexuality. The ideal Victorian lady it had originally been designed for, after all, wasn't supposed to have any libido," she writes without irony. (She has plenty of company; remember the feminist outcry over Florence Griffith Joyner's lace running tights in the '88 Olympics.) Of course most haute couture is preposterous and unwearable; that's the point of it. Moreover, the miniskirt is not a modern form of foot binding. (In fact, it first made a splash in the '60s, in the heady early days of women's liberation.) Feminists are so intent on not having society judge women by the way we look that they end up challenging the right to allow one's looks to reflect one's individuality. And isn't there something slightly confused about feminists complaining in one breath that the new fashions call for more full-figured models (further evidence of the effort to promote a barefoot and pregnant mindset) and continuing to complain in another breath that our beauty standards encourage anorexia?

But Faludi's implicit model of women as victims is perhaps most distorting when it comes to her conclusions. The rhetoric, the tone, the drama, and the sheer weight of her book lead one to believe that the backlash was quite successful in determining women's fate during the '80s. But Faludi's own facts tell a far more complicated story. Women spurned nearly every effort that was made (according to Faludi) to push them back into the kitchen, from watching TV shows with "nesting goodwives" to buying garter belts and teddies. In fact, they continued to increase their participation in the work force each year in record numbers. As Faludi herself writes: "No matter how bruising and discouraging her collisions with the backlash wall, each woman in her own way persisted in pushing against it."

The problem is that Faludi doesn't fully acknowledge women's actual responses until her epilogue, where she adds that "this quiet female resistance was the uncelebrated counterpoint to the anti-feminist campaign of the '80s." But it is nowhere less celebrated than in her own book. Writing this in the introduction would have undermined her portrayal of women as helpless, passive victims of society's devious designs. And indeed, Faludi goes out of her way to disparage what women can do individually to improve their lot: "To remove the backlash wall rather than to thrash continually against it, women needed to be armed with more than their privately held grievances and goals. Indeed, to instruct each woman to struggle alone was to set each woman up, yet again, for defeat."

For the same reason, in order for Faludi to counter the backlash's premise that all women's problems are personal, the message of *Backlash* had to be: working women have no personal problems. After expertly demolishing the media's hyped-up myths, Faludi fails to acknowledge that in many cases when you peel away the layers of hype, you find kernels of truth. She might have devoted at least a few sentences, for example, to the fact that, infertility statistics aside, the physical experience of childbearing tends to be easier on a woman in her early 20s than on a woman in her late 30s. And in debunking the "toxic" day care myth (one of the most commonly quoted studies used monkeys as subjects), she implicitly makes extreme and dubious assertions of her own: that children don't get sick more often in day care; that day care doesn't diminish maternal bonds; that there is no harm whatsoever to infants.

The truth is that women do have personal problems, some of which are the direct result of changes in women's expectations and opportunities. But these problems no more make us the victims of feminism than our continuing inequality makes us the victims of backlash. Moreover, acknowledging the existence of these problems does not represent defeat. As if Faludi has never talked to a woman who works, the implication of her analysis is that working women do not suffer from burnout, stress-related ailments, depression, lack of self-esteem. It's no doubt true, as she shows through numerous studies, that single women and working women are in better mental health than mothers who work in the home. But that doesn't mean that balancing domestic and professional desires and duties is painless. As feminists and Faludi herself rightly argue, working women's lives would be considerably more manageable if housework and child care could be shared equally with men, and if women no longer felt they had to work twice as hard as their male colleagues to prove their worth.

Clearly there is no single path to such equitable arrangements. But the expectation that most of the solutions will come from an organized single-constituency group has been proving its inadequacy every day. Of course women internalize a lot of sexist stereotypes—parents who discourage independence, teachers who ignore us, employers who demean us, husbands who abuse us—and of course years of this will wear down our ability to assert our demands, our will to walk away from bad situations. But so will thinking of ourselves as victims. We need to recognize and to resist external evils, but we don't need to exaggerate them. Pornography, for example, has become a feminist metaphor for everything that besets women in the social sphere; attempts to censor it exclusively for the welfare of women are *real* manifestations of neo-Victorianism, though Faludi curiously never mentions them. Moreover, we don't need external evils to become our excuses. Just as we don't excuse men for hurting others by blaming their "socialization," we shouldn't excuse women for hurting themselves.

Facile invocations of "self-esteem" are no cure for women's problems, despite all the books, including Steinem's, that promise the contrary. Her suggestions

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for gaining a sense of control over one's life turn out to be just as banal and passive and victim-oriented as the non-solutions offered by traditional feminists. Instead of striking out on our own, Steinem wants us to turn deep within ourselves. She seems to have fully accepted today's trendy self-help theories: to salve our wounded "core" self-esteem (that which optimally comes from unconditional parental love), all we need to do is "reparent our inner child," develop our spontaneous, creative sides, discover our "future selves." In tired, New Age psychobabble ("Each of us has an inner compass that helps us know where to go and what to do"), Steinem concocts a familiar brew of self-actualization, co-dependency, and spiritualism. In such an analysis, the same danger presents itself: the danger of turning explanations into excuses, of seeing ourselves as victims not just of society but of our childhood.

Yet there is a useful underlying message in Steinem's book: that women can start thinking of themselves as "I" rather than "We." And in doing so, they can cast off the emphasis on the collective, victim psychology that characterized first-stage feminism, as well as the celebration of uniquely "feminine" thinking and feeling that was one legacy of second-stage feminism. As Elizabeth Cady Stanton asserted in "Solitude of Self," her 1892 speech before the U.S. Senate Committee on Woman Suffrage: "The strongest reason for giving woman ... a complete emancipation from all forms of bondage, of custom, dependence, superstition ... is the solitude and personal responsibility of her own individual life.... Nothing adds such dignity to character as the recognition of one's self-sovereignty."

For victim psychology does not just hurt women personally and professionally. It also hurts them politically. Feminists claim that they don't like to be called "women and other minorities," that they don't want to be considered a "special interest." But given the way that they have chosen their issues, the way that they have lumped them under the heading "women's issues" and made them the special responsibility of female candidates, and the way that they have disparaged any idea that doesn't descend from the top tier of collective feminist thought, they can't expect much else. Feminists' obsession with "gender consciousness" has not only fostered a bemused animosity among both women and men, it has also reinforced prescribed gender roles, forcing women to confront the same negative feelings that were smothering our feminist foremothers. "I want my work considered as mine, not as some tour de force or bit of presumptuous rivalry on the part of an eccentric member of an excluded group," the writer Miriam Allen de Ford declared in the late 1920s. "I want to stand before the world and say: 'I am myself. I have defects, weaknesses, and faults. I want them judged as mine—not as a woman's.'"

There are plenty of issues that still remain to be addressed before women's progress toward full equality can be called anything like complete, but they are almost all best construed as problems of individual rights and family needs. And the solutions of first-resort do not necessarily lie in the public sphere. Clearly abortion is a "public" issue—it needs a government imprimatur, and therefore a group response. There is no mystery about why this has been the only issue in recent years that has roused women to public protest. Still, it is time for a shift in the character of that response, from alienating rhetorical lobbying of the Supreme Court, which has been futile, to grass-roots organizing of women—and men—to sway legislatures, local and federal.

The issue of sex discrimination—in hiring, in promotions, in pay—is now best seen as a mostly private affair. There was a good reason, a quarter century ago, that discrimination was emphasized as a problem that affected women as a group. But now, with equal employment opportunity laws long on the books and women having at least broken into nearly every field, the continual focus on discrimination as such—as well as the singular emphasis on government-induced solutions—may be inhibiting true equality. The deleterious long-term effects of affirmative action on blacks have been well described. The same applies to women.

Moreover, the continual focus on lawsuits as the first and only recourse has not only eroded the self-confidence that was supposed to result from the recognition of group oppression, but it has also stymied women from acting on their own. The assumption is that taking the risk and confronting an employer with a grievance—as a man would do—will get you fired. It very well might (which could even constitute better grounds for a lawsuit). In any case, a confrontation allows you to act like a responsible adult—not abjectly, like a helpless member of an oppressed group, fully dependent on government for protection. Perhaps if feminists devoted more time to encouraging women to vent their anger directly at their bosses rather than at the omnivorous patriarchy, women would be

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more successful at it. A similar expectation and encouragement of individual self-assertion should certainly be the answer of first resort to the problems of harassment and date rape, to which there are never going to be smoothly delineated legal or procedural solutions.

Government cannot cleanse society of sexism; culture and time can. Meanwhile women are going to have to work harder to break down remaining stereotypes. Of course it's unfair. But the alternative—the collective whining and complaining—accomplishes little aside from perpetuating these stereotypes. The corporate world used to think women couldn't work like men; we've proved them wrong by working like men. Now one explanation of the "glass ceilings" that women confront is the belief that we can't think like men, that we're mere technicians as opposed to the idea people, the policy-makers. These barriers can only be broken on our own; promotions through affirmative action prove very little—to our employers, or to ourselves.

As for the issues that are best counted as "family" issues (child care, parental leave, flextime) there has been a surprising hesitancy on the part of organized feminism to put these at the top of the agenda. (Faludi, in the traditional feminist spirit, worries that such concerns dilute the necessary emphasis on women's rights.) In fact, that may be just as well, for precisely the point is to rally broad support behind these issues, which are not "women's issues," except in some reactionary vision that equates concern with the domestic sphere with womanhood. (The point is also, obviously, to get men just as involved with these concerns on a practical, daily basis.) There is a role for government to play on such issues as parental leave and tax policy, but the truth is that the more subtle flexibility that is increasingly required for families juggling professional and private lives will be a matter for men and women to negotiate with their employers.

This doesn't leave the women's movement as it currently stands with a whole lot to do. But that soon may not matter; the movement is beginning to implode. "Multicultural feminism" has spawned so many divisions and subsets—Native American feminists, gay feminists, Jewish feminists, biracial feminists—that the whole concept of "sisterhood" is fast dissolving. Feminists are racked more than ever these days with sectarian questions. Who should be leading the movement, whites fighting glass ceilings or blacks struggling with the problems of the inner cities? How do you "prioritize" oppression? Resentment (from feeling overly oppressed) and guilt (from not being oppressed enough) have created an atmosphere in which only a Chicana Buddist asexual would feel qualified to represent women.

These tensions of identity politics are actually bringing feminism much closer to a "third stage"—in which self transcendteps onr—than many in the movement would like to believe. For the same reason that young women today shun the label, feminists are beginning to allow their individuality to shine through, and they are starting to take umbrage at having anyone "speak" for them; they have begun to realize that women are just as different from each other as we are different from men. "Feminism means that ... [a woman] wants to push on to the finest, fullest, freest expression of herself," said Rose Young, a novelist and charter member of Heterodoxy. "She wants to be an individual."

This kind of thinking was present at the outset of the second wave—as Steinem put it, "We made the revolutionary discovery that everyone didn't *have* to live the same way"—but too quickly it was overrun by collective, political necessity. By now it's clear, however, that you can't take the freedom out of pure feminism any more than you can take it out of pure liberalism. Women should feel as free to have five children and bake cookies all day as to re-create themselves through plastic surgery, wear bustiers, skin-tight miniskirts, and spiked heels, and read hard-core porn magazines. This might offend your morals or sensibilities, but the beauty of real feminism is that it's none of your business. •

A Clamor of Tongues

BY DONALD DAVIE

Provinces
by Czeslaw Milosz
translated by the author and Robert Hass

(Ecco Press, 72 pp., $19.95)

Beginning with My Streets
by Czeslaw Milosz
translated by Madeline G. Levine

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 288 pp., $30)

The Poet's Work: An Introduction to Czeslaw Milosz
by Leonard Nathan and Arthur Quinn

(Harvard University Press, 176 pp., $29.95, $9.95 paper)

In his latest gathering of essays, *Beginning with My Streets*—more a medley than a collection, with a deceptive air of being "thrown together"—Czeslaw Milosz includes an interview from 1988 in which he intimates, mildly enough, his dissatisfaction with the poetry of today, in many languages. His charge against contemporary poetry is that it has been impoverished from within by closing off too many doors in a search for "purity in lyricism." This accusation has been leveled before by Milosz, but never emphatically, because being emphatic is seldom his style. All the same, it is the clue to his achievement; he is one modern poet who has no interest in being a lyrical poet, who thinks indeed that exertions to that end are morally and politically of dubious.

Rather than the lyrical "I," emoting out of its own subjectivity (as Robert Lowell did, or Sylvia Plath), Milosz favors, and in his own poems puts into play, not one voice but several: voices that cross over, contradict one another, dissolve just when we think we have learned to trust them. This can be seen in poems short enough to look like lyrics. For instance, "Should, Should Not":

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A man should not love the moon.
An axe should not lose weight in his hand.
His garden should smell of rotting apples
And grow a fair amount of nettles.
A man when he talks should not use words
that are dear to him

Or split open a seed to find out what is
inside it.
He should not drop a crumb of bread, or
spit in the fire
(So at least I was taught in Lithuania).
When he steps on marble stairs,
[illegible] may, that boor, try to chip them with his
[illegible]oot
As a reminder that the stairs will not last
forever.

Leonard Nathan and Arthur Quinn valuably place this in a series specifically addressed in the first place to Milosz's Berkeley students in the 1960s, when he saw the frivolity of the Parisian intelligentsia monstrously combined with the solemn habits of the Californian mentality: the worst of both worlds. Milosz himself has identified the marble stairs as those of "the Berkeley library." Accordingly, the poem is a series of admonitions. But each new admonition differs, grammatically and in versification, from the one before it. Thus any one admonition may be in isolation challenged. For instance, "a man ... should not use words that are dear to him": what, *never*? That remonstration is allowed for. More crucial, the person whose boot tries to chip the marble stairs is called "a boor," but is not his endeavor underwritten by what his teachers of the 1960s or even today may rightly impress on him or her as a duty: the questioning of the marmorealized "canon"? A vast amount of work is done by the simple monosyllable "may," breaking into a sequence of "should" and "should not." Does "may" mean "is likely to," or "is permitted to"?

Recognizing these ambiguities, Nathan and Quinn advise us that this poem's "celebration of the acceptance of limitations" is "ironic." On the one hand, this opens up the possibility that the shifts of perspective are just rhetorically determined, on the assumption that no one would have attended to the poet-professor laying down the law over and over. On the other hand, it opens up the more dismaying perspective that the poet doesn't know where he stands on these issues, and is content to leave the matter suspended.

It is instructive, and I think conclusive, to see how Milosz responded when another interviewer offered to him the term "ironic" in relation to this poem. Milosz ducked the question, but conceded that the poem is spoken through a mask: "Yes, it's a mask. What can you do with a strange guy who doesn't understand himself?" And then he happily endorsed something said to him by an admirer of his translations from Scripture: "An instrument, not a human being but a device." The voice that speaks the poem is not that of a human being, whose lyrical "I" might declare itself in love with lunar purity (and sterility), but instead a device, perhaps divine, for which admonitions and prohibitions from Lithuanian folklore are no less binding than others arrived at on other grounds. It is not just the expatriate poet-professor who admonishes his misguided students, but a being more mysterious, drawing its authority from more occult sources. The poet in propria persona, the lyrical "I," is merely "a strange guy who doesn't understand himself," and so he must be discounted.

Normally one would not bear down in this way on a poem translated from a foreign tongue. There is always the possibility that substituting "may" for "should" is the result merely of a translator's inattention. But once Milosz's *Collected Poems* appeared in English in 1988, his poetry became a very abnormal phenomenon indeed, perhaps unprecedented. He has busied himself so constantly with the translation of his poems into English, assembling and training and collaborating with an exceptionally gifted team of translators, that we do not hear from him, or from his Polish-speaking admirers, the familiar wail of "how much is lost in translation." Undoubtedly much is lost; but Milosz's position seems to be that he will stand as stoutly by a poem of his in its American-English version as in its original Polish version.

He is even prepared to regard himself as an American poet. It is hard to see how a lyrical poet could take this position, however gifted and devoted his translators. On the contrary, it is the proudest boast made by or on behalf of the lyricist—Keats or Hart Crane, Lermontov or Mandelstam—that he is "untranslatable." Milosz makes no such boast. But this humility should not deceive us; Milosz is on his own admission a haughty man, not at all ingratiating toward the American public. What looks like humility derives not from the sort of person he is, but from the sort of poetry he writes—which is not a lyrical poetry.

Because most American readers have been led to believe that lyrical poetry is the only poetry there is, or the only poetry that can earn respect in modern times, there is a gulf that they have to bridge before they can encounter Milosz's poetry on its own terms. Nathan and Quinn's study is excellent and long overdue. (Nathan has for many years been Milosz's translator, collaborator, and, we may suppose, confidant.) Still, to my mind they concede too much to the assumption that a poet's poems, collected, bear witness to an agon: to an individual going his own way, against the socially or ideologically determined consensus.

This is one way of looking at Milosz's poetic achievement; but it is not the only way, nor is it the way that the poet invites. For instance, the long and forbidding and formally reckless poem in seven sections, *From the Rising of the Sun* (1973-74), can be addressed, as they address it, in terms of ecstasy and pessimism, as an expression of ecstatic pessimism. But if we cut the poem free from the moods of its creator, we can see that it is concerned with, and structured about, the historically verifiable facts of what the Roman Catholic Church has declared orthodox and heterodox. There is much drama, for Milosz is greatly drawn to some of the heresies, which he finds borne out by his own experience: for instance, Socinianism, which in the seventeenth century was the form that Protestantism took in Transylvania and northern Poland, produced martyrs whose nonconforming witness Milosz admires as heroic. More readers will think they understand ecstasy and pessimism than are at home with "Socinian" or "Manichaean." But it is these latter words that are exact and definable.

This is not at all to say that Milosz's poetry is "impersonal," as Eliot's aspired to be. Milosz continually draws or drives us back to circumstances peculiar to him, in particular to the Lithuanian/Polish crossroads where he was born and nurtured, which has given him, so he powerfully persuades us, an outlook on the intellectual and factual history of the present century such as we cannot get from any other source. In the same way, by repeatedly harking back, he plainly discerns in his own track through life a development, an Odyssey or a Pilgrim's Progress. If we can't discern that track as he wants us to, part of the reason is that we remain bewildered about the simple chronology, because of the waywardness with which his poetry has been bit by bit disclosed to us in English. It is a bewilderment that the *Collected Poems* alleviates but cannot altogether dispel. What does seem clear is that when Milosz looks back, he judges his actions and the actions of his contemporaries against a standard more ancient and more exacting than we are used to—against, for instance, the scale of the Seven Deadly Sins.

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Milosz is very sensitive to the allegation that his constant harkings back convict him of nostalgia. Against this charge he can call on the rather powerful precedent of Proust. Milosz will not much relish this association; though two of his books are customarily described as novels, he is very sniffy about the novel as a genre, making a momentous exception for Dostoyevsky. However that may be, I find the Proustian presence helpful especially with *The Separate Notebooks*, which were separately published alone in English in 1984 and are also confusingly part of an erstwhile unheard-of collection called *Hymn of the Pearl* (1982). "Where is the truth of unremembered things?" is a question at the heart of *The Separate Notebooks*; and it is surely a question that Proust prompts if he doesn't explicitly pose it.

This explains, I think, why, in the latest pieces added to *Collected Poems*, there appears a seven-part quite straightforward and entertaining sequence, *La Belle Epoque*. Milosz was born just early enough to experience Proust's world of "women in corsets and tournures, of whom one says either 'ladies' or 'cocottes,' the catechism, the list of sins before confession, music lessons, French verbs." The point is not to mourn the passing of that world, but to wonder at how substantial it seemed, as much in a coach of the Trans-Siberian Railway as on a Paris boulevard. The last thing that Milosz wants is to transcend historical time, to "soar above" it. Like an epic poet, he wants on the contrary to be mired in history in all its particularity—and in geography, too. The effect of such evocations is to locate the speaker of the poems in a segment of historical time as well as in a geographical space. And yet all these particulars are mustered to answer a question that must be called metaphysical.

Certain things he remembers or can reconstruct, others have gone out of mind. And "where is the truth of unremembered things?" Where else but in the mind of God? That is, no doubt, the right answer. But it is not an answer that satisfies Milosz, and we should think the worse of him if it did. For though he is a Christian poet—there's that scandalous cat out of the bag!—he can hardly give offense to unbelievers or to adherents of other faiths. Although he can usually persuade himself that the orthodox Christian answer to tormenting questions is the best on offer, he never deludes himself into thinking that having the answer removes the torment. Who remembers the unremembered dead? The question torments him as much when he's been given an answer as before.

And so, though it is true that in recent years Milosz has written Christian poems unprecedentedly serene and exhilarating, the nature of that serenity must be understood. It is not the serenity of a man who at last has all the answers, but of a man who acknowledges that some tormenting questions are unanswerable. The orthodox answers may be humbly acceded to, but the hurt remains nonetheless. Healing the hurt may be within the capacity of the priest, but the poet cannot and should not pretend to heal it. The priestly and the poetic vocations are distinct; and it is part of the case against the lyrical poets that too often they, or their admirers, blur the one office into the other. It is the business of the learned poet (and Milosz is certainly that) to know the answers on offer, now and in the past, and to discriminate among them; but it is not his duty or his privilege to administer comfort, beyond saying: "Yes, I've wondered about that myself."

There arises, for those few who perhaps pedantically care, the question of how far and in what way Milosz's poetry is related to "modernism" or "the modern movement," to what Amy Clampitt lately in these pages called "the fault line that opened in 1912, and has been no more than precariously spanned from that day to this." Though he was only 1 year old in 1912, Milosz recognizes that fault line, and locates himself in relation to it. He is certainly not of those who believe that modernism in poetry was an aberration that he may equably ignore. (His Christianity did not give him that cop-out: Eliot and Claudel, not to speak of Mandelstam and Pasternak, were modernist poets who professed themselves to be Christians.)

What is astringent and refreshing about Milosz's attitude to poetic modernism is that, as an Eastern European moving in and into a society that idolized Paris, he recognized how modernism, the Anglo-American version as much as the Polish version, took its bearings from France, and from a France culturally exhausted, in decline. Not for him the Francophilia that too often predetermined the judgments of Eliot and Pound. He is sure that Baudelaire is a very great poet, but not on the grounds to which Eliot appealed. Thus Milosz will endorse the modernist endeavor in poetry, will even enlist in the enterprise, but with a special sardonic awareness of how tainted its origins were. For him, it is modernism that has reintroduced into poetry the use of multiple voices, as against the single voice of the lyricist.

This explains why, when he looked at the American poetry that he had pitched himself into in 1960, he lit upon the unfashionable figure of Robinson Jeffers. Milosz was searching in American poetry not for a confirmation of truths that he had brought with him from Europe, but for a radical alternative—one that, as it turned out, he could not accept, but for which he was deeply grateful because it posed the alternatives in the starkest terms. Those alternatives were, at bottom, Nature or Culture. Milosz, inescapably European, opted in the end for culture; that is to say, for history. But he honored Jeffers's insistence that whereas Nature might seem at times to be comforting, in truth it was merciless—as Milosz already knew from his hunting in

Donald Justice Before A Soft-Drink Vending Machine

He's put his two quarters in the slot
And pressed a button,
Then another
But, nothing.

Again he presses them,
Muttering, putting some muscle
Behind the heel of his hand,
The ire rising in him, finding

Its level, faltering,
Spent finally in a last muted
Jab and last muted curse, the eyeglasses
Edging further along the bridge of his nose.

He'll not kick the machine
Nor report to the office across campus
For a refund. Upstairs
The students will be reconvening

To their workshop,
Sheaves of sestinas
On the table, their own
And those of past masters before them.

For a moment he stands speechless
Before the looming, mechanical cheat
Full in the glare of its red-blue lights, there
In the otherwise dark passageway.

The two vertical masses
Front each other, so,
Then the poet turns and heads off
Toward what he can hope to know.

DANIEL RIFENBURGH

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the Lithuanian forests. Whatever Warsaw or Paris or New York might hint, Milosz's attachment to Jeffers's poetry was not a matter of one provincialism calling to another. What was at issue between the Polish poet and the Californian poet was something on which programmatic "modernism" hardly impinged. Optimism and hope are diffident. Milosz can hope, where Jeffers can't. But he's at one with the Californian in scorning optimism, because nature plainly is pessimist. Although of course Jeffers wasn't a lyrical poet, any more than Milosz.

To readers with short memories, it may seem that Milosz is now invulnerable, a consecrated icon carrying himself around—with unflagging energy, astonishing at 80—to artistic occasions here and abroad. But Milosz's international honors shouldn't obscure the true image of him as an intransigent loner. His late-come laurels aren't anything he can rest upon. For he is much resented. Some of the resentments—the Polish ones, for instance—I sense but cannot with confidence explain. He has made enemies; though his style is mostly suave, he does not suffer fools gladly, and his judgments are unsparing, even peremptory.

One Anglo-American class or coterie is particularly resentful. These are the literary warriors of the cold war, who made Milosz's *The Captive Mind* (1953) one of their founding texts. With the end of the cold war, these warriors find themselves out of a job, and it particularly irks them that Milosz isn't thrown on the scrap heap as they are, since *The Captive Mind* turns out to have been only an episode—heartfelt and never disowned—in a career that was focused on metaphysical, not political, issues; on the human condition at all times, not just in the second half of the twentieth century; on love and death, not chiefly or exclusively on political liberty.

This is what was at issue in Milosz's protest to *The New York Review of Books* about A. Alvarez's review of the *Collected Poems*—not that the review was grudging, it was laudatory, but in Milosz's view his poems were being applauded for the wrong reason:

> Perhaps some Western writers are longing for subjects provided by spasms of historical violent change, but I can assure Mr. Alvarez that we, i.e., natives of hazy Eastern regions, perceive History as a curse and prefer to restore to literature its autonomy, dignity, and independence from social pressures.... The voice of a poet should be purer and more distinct than the noise (or confused music) of History.

And so, considering art in its relation to the polis, we need to look, in his new collection of poems, at "The Thistle, the Nettle," which has for an epigraph something from the poet's kinsman, the Lithuanian poet in French, Oscar de Milosz:

> The thistle, the nettle, the burdock, the belladonna
> Have a future. Theirs are wastelands
> And rusty railroad tracks, the sky, silence.
>
> Who shall I be for men many generations later?
> When, after the clamor of tongues, the award goes to silence?
>
> I was to be redeemed by the gift of arranging words
> But must be prepared for an earth without grammar,
> For the thistle, the nettle, the burdock, the belladonna,
> And a small wind above them, a sleepy cloud, silence.

I do not know whether to thank Milosz, or his collaborator Robert Hass, for the exquisite cadence of that last line. Is it too much to hope that after Auschwitz (which is certainly in Milosz's mind) the end may indeed be in pitiful and appalled silence, not in arguments for and against? Poetry can articulate that silence. Argument cannot, nor priestcraft either.

DONALD DAVIE's most recent book of poems is *To Scorch or Freeze: Poems About the Sacred* (University of Chicago Press).

Republic of Desire

BY PETER BROOKS

Sade My Neighbor
by Pierre Klossowski
translated and with an introduction by Alphonso Lingis

(Northwestern University Press, 144 pp., $34.95, $9.95 paper)

Sade: A Sudden Abyss
by Annie Le Brun
translated by Camille Naish

(City Lights Books, 220 pp., $12.95 paper)

Edmund Wilson once remarked that Sade was the only author he couldn't read at breakfast. Sade continues to present the uniquely disturbing phenomenon of a genuinely accursed, horrifying, and unacceptable literature that rightly claims the attention of serious readers. He has become part of the canon of French literature, despite the fact that there is no place for such writing in the normal activities and the waking thoughts of most people, at breakfast or even later in the day. Last year, in fact, the first volume of Sade's complete works was published in the Pléïade edition, that collection of leather-bound volumes printed on Bible paper that virtually defines what the arbiters of French culture consider canonical. This bibliographical apotheosis comes a scant forty years after another attempt to publish and to sell publicly a complete edition of his works encountered censorship; Jean-Jacques Pauvert, the publisher, was convicted and fined.

Does Sade in the Pléïade represent some ultimate demonstration of the capacity of contemporary culture to absorb (or to "recuperate," as the French say) the most dissident and subversive elements into a mainstream so indifferent that even the disembowelments and the manglings of the Sadean libertines are taken as kitsch? In a sense, it does: we certainly have lost our capacity to be shocked, especially by written horror. Debates about censorship now almost all concern the impact of images, not words. Sade's "crimes of love" belong, however, to a universe of writing, stylish and concerted, as a number of contemporary critics have demonstrated, Barthes most notably, who described with great precision the way the Sadean orgy is composed, quite in the manner of the menu for dinner in a fine restaurant.

So emphatically was Sade a writer that there has developed a body of Sade criticism that draws his fangs by treating his delirium as purely verbal, as a sumptuous performance of the imagination

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that has nothing to do with reality. It is true, of course, that Sade's horrific universe was created not as a reflection of actual experiences, but out of a deprivation of them: it was mainly the work of his long years in prison. Sade spent twenty-seven years in thirteen different prisons, the longest stretch, from 1777 to 1790, as the result of a *lettre de cachet* obtained by his mother-in-law. Liberated by the revolution, he soon went to prison again, then to the Charenton madhouse. Sade's work, then, was the creation of a solitary onanist, whose confined body was the counterpoint to a mind unleashed to imaginings of limitless power and potency, holding the whole universe under its heel.

Still, even the most delirious literature must, to be effective, have a referent outside itself, a referent at least in our psyches. And the kind of reference created in the reader of Sade is authentically distressing. For even the imaginative possibility that pleasure could derive from the outrages that he describes ought to produce a moral distress. As Annie Le Brun writes, with her customary theatricality, Sade's works represent "the sudden advent of a world which would henceforth disrupt the field of human consciousness, and disrupt it absolutely." (This kind of hyperbole makes her book, which was written as an introduction to the publication in 1985 of the Pauvert edition of the complete works, somewhat tedious at times, though it is also a well-informed, useful preface to Sade.) Those censors, starting with members of Sade's family, who attempted for close to two centuries to burn his books were at least being logical: there really is no way that such literature can be considered either entertaining or socially redemptive.

For other reasons, of course, we must not burn Sade's books. But if we don't burn them, what do we do with them? Make them classics, seems to be the French response. The canonization of Sade's work was an inevitable result of the importance given to it by a considerable number of influential French intellectuals: Bataille, Blanchot, Paulhan, Beauvoir, Lacan, Barthes, and others, some of whom, galvanized by the censorship of Pauvert's edition in the early 1950s, have made high, possibly extravagant, claims for the radical necessity of reading the really unreadable Sade. "There is always a moment when the mind cannot bear to be confronted with its latent criminality," writes Le Brun, summarizing the claim that reading Sade constitutes a vital recognition of an aspect of the human that we wish to deny. Fair enough. But how do we absorb, psychically and morally, scenes in which women are raped and sodomized with red-hot irons, molten lead is poured on tongue and clitoris, and finally the mutilated bodies become the object of erotic frenzy?

Pierre Klossowski was in many ways the first to raise the Sadean standard for modern times. *Sade My Neighbor* was originally published in 1947, then reissued in 1967 with the addition of the essay "The Philosopher Villain" that stands at the head of the volume. As Alphonso Lingis points out in his helpful preface, the unthinkable cruelty and inhumanity that came to the surface with World War II put sadism on our intellectual agenda. ("Sadism" as a term of psychotherapy seems to have been introduced in 1888 by Krafft-Ebing.) But Sade's work made a more complicated claim on postwar attention. It was at once authentically monstrous and intensely rationalist. It was, in Lingis's words, "a Leibnizian *mathesis universalis* of evil" that needed to be confronted precisely by those humanists and rationalists who had been thrown into disarray by the demonstration that human civilization was the thinnest of veneers.

Sade My Neighbor doesn't quite capture the intent of Klossowski's title, *Sade mon prochain.* Sade my fellowman, I think Klossowski means to suggest, summoning us to recognize that Sade cannot be excluded from our understanding of humanity. Like it or not, there he is. Again, fair enough. Klossowski's exposition of Sade's "system" is brilliantly dialectical, and yet it is, I think, fundamentally flawed.

Klossowski insists upon seeing this self-professed atheist and materialist, who never ceased denouncing the ravages produced by the illusion called God, as a kind of negative theologian, whose blasphemy is a perverse acknowledgment of the divine. Such a view is based on the accurate perception that the essential mode of Sadean writing is outrage, and "in outrage what is outraged is maintained to serve as a support for transgression." This is convincing, up to a point.

It is certainly true that the Sadean libertine, for all his explosions of pleasure, is not a happy libertine. In Sade, pleasure tends to be accompanied by cries of blasphemy and howls of anger: it is an act of defiance, a thrillingly conscious transgression of taboos. There would be no pleasure in Sade's universe if it did not partake of the sinful. Klossowski finds an analogy in the Sadean view of "perversion," which, "in the acts it inspires (particularly the sodomist act), derives its transgressive value only from the permanence of norms (such as the normative differentiation of the sexes)." In other words, there is always a normative rationality against which transgressions define themselves, which prevents the non-normative positions from becoming integrally rational.

But this is all very unhistorical. Klossowski writes as if belief in God can never be, has never been, escaped or rejected. For Sade, in his repeated outrage of the concept of the deity, wished to establish both the historical reality of the belief in God *and* the possibility of a future history from which this error would be eradicated. As Le Brun writes, "Sade is the first, if not the only, author to have seriously conceived of a universe without God, and never to have forgotten it." Le Brun takes a firm stance against the theological interpretation of Sade. While she dismisses Klossowski's position too facilely, she does properly suggest the energy of Sade's banishment of any deity.

Klossowski's conception of normative sexuality, moreover, is a mite rigid. "Perversion," after all, is a relative term. All human sexuality—as psychoanalysis has shown—is based on fantasies, deriving from infancy, and swerves from simply genital utility. Le Brun maintains that "as far as Sade is concerned, the category of perversion does not exist at all." This is true, but it is a simplification. Sade wants everyone to please himself (sometimes even herself) according to his idiosyncratic needs. He delights in finding new deviations from the acceptable, and exults in what he calls "the crimes of love." At the same time, these are simply impulses of nature that are to be acted upon in strict obedience to nature's dictates. Once again, as with his atheism, there is a conflict between Sade's belief that the deviant and the normative are meaningless categories and his need to preserve the radical otherness of blasphemy and transgression.

The relationship of the norm to its transgression is of the utmost importance in Sade's political writings during the French Revolution, principally in "Frenchmen, yet another effort if you want to be republicans," the famous tract inserted into *Philosophy in the Boudoir* (1795). (This text is well discussed by Klossowski, and it was brilliantly commented on by Blanchot in his essay "The Fundamental Impropriety.") During the Revolution, Sade was in a position somewhat like that of the bohemian journalist in Flaubert's *Sentimental Education,* who discovers about the insurrection of 1848 that "the Revo-

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lution went beyond his own eccentricities." Sade, however, wants to go further, and to claim, in the person of Dolmancé, the fictive author of the pamphlet, that the Revolution has not gone far enough, has stopped short of founding an order that would recognize that the individual eccentricity, the idiosyncratic claim on pleasure, is the absolute measure of existence, and therefore the principle on which the state and its laws should be constructed.

"*Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains*": this was Sade's brilliant negative rejoinder to the chilling rhetoric of Robespierre, Saint-Just, and the other Jacobins struggling to institute the "Republic of Virtue" through decrees enforcing virtue—and sending those who failed to meet its definition to the guillotine. What Sade understood is that once you have rid yourself of the transcendent guarantee of laws and ethics, once you have rid yourself of God by killing his representative on earth, the King, then you are faced with a situation of radical lawlessness and sudden silence, in which you can start to speak anew, and in which you are obliged, since the old discursive rules no longer apply, to say everything. (*Tout dire*, as Rousseau said before Sade.)

In the Sadean version, saying everything means not stopping at any point along the path indicated by logic—Sade was a ferocious logician—and not allowing oneself to be waylaid by mere prejudice. If the republic needs laws, says Sade, let them be as few in number and as gentle in spirit as possible; for in a society based on liberty and equality there should be very few acts that are considered criminal. One only commits an injustice in applying legal sanctions to someone who is by nature incapable of obeying the law. It is not difficult to see how such principles can form the basis for a Sadean utopia that is at once rationally constructed and the very anti-model of reason as we usually understand it.

Why outlaw theft, since it usefully trains its practitioners in dexterity? And where is the justice of asking those who have nothing to respect the property of those who have everything? Laws against theft are merely a means for the rich to oppress the poor. As for prostitution, adultery, incest, rape, and sodomy, they are positively useful in a republic born from insurrection, since these immoralities maintain the insurrectionary state as the permanent condition of the republic. In a state of liberty, no one can claim exclusive possession of another person, and therefore the norm in such a republic is not marriage, it is organized prostitution, in pleasant and healthy establishments. (Sade considers the satisfaction of desire only from the point of view of the desirer, who can do absolutely anything he wants to do, though he offers to redress the balance by having each object of desire in turn become a desirer.) If such an arrangement results in children without fathers, no matter: all children should be *enfants de la patrie*.

This kind of punning verbal logic—quite irrefutable in its own terms—continues when Sade assures us that incest should be the rule in any government based on fraternity, or when he claims that "the habit men have of living together in republics" will inevitably make sodomy more common. When he comes to murder, Sade argues that nothing in nature delegitimates it. On the contrary, to destroy is simply to do the work of nature, which is essentially destruction. The most repulsive crimes are necessary to the republic, moreover, since it is by its very nature criminal: it is born in crime, in insurrection and disobedience, in the regicide that is also a deicide and a patricide, and it can only maintain itself by crime. If the republic tried to be virtuous, it would fall into inertia and ruin.

Thus the Sadean idea of the republic is that of an inherently immoral regime, born in crime and needing to exist by way of crime in order to maintain the "permanent insurrection" that is the very nature of republicanism. This makes of the Sadean republic something of a perpetual motion machine. The "one more effort" needed is always followed by yet another. The goal that Sade fears the Revolution never will reach is in constant flight forward. It is defined by the necessity of saying everything, just as the libertines of *The 120 Days of Sodom* must execute all possible permutations of all possible crimes. "Everything," after all, has no final limit. Saying everything engages one in a constant process of negation, and it is premised on an assumption of absolute sovereignty. (At least for as long as one talks: in most of Sade's writings the pains and the pleasures are accompanied by talk, make no sense without talk.) Revolution as defined by Sade must be permanent, unending, continually transgressive, and essentially personal rather than political: it aims to liberate the desiring individual rather than the repressive state.

As a version of utopia, the Sadean republic is almost as compelling as it is horrifying. Of course, Sade's fears that the Revolution would stop far short of real personal freedom were fully justified. But the problem of liberty, insurrection, and speech is not merely political. It is much more fundamental. Once one has eliminated God as the object of belief, or the object of blasphemy, what remains is nature.

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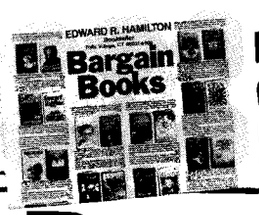

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Nature was the principle so often evoked by eighteenth-century philosophers. For most of them, nature provided the basis of a morality of interest, where the compact of civil society comes to repress the acts that trespass on the happiness and the security of the collectivity. But what if one envisages society not in terms of interests, but in terms of desires? Then nature legitimates everything and authorizes nothing. "Can one possibly imagine," writes Sade, "that nature could give us the possibility of a crime that would outrage her?" To commit incest, rape, or murder leaves nature indifferent, impassible, unchanged. Indeed, to destroy simply makes one the tool of nature, which presents a perpetual mutation of forms, without permanence.

Thus the Sadean libertine, while claiming nature as the principle for everything he wants and does, must also hate nature, since it is the very opposite of a principle. Nature, too, must be outraged, must be blasphemed against, all the while in the agonized knowledge that one cannot, even in the most outrageous acts, touch nature, make the slightest mark on nature—indeed, that outrages merely serve its ends. As one of Sade's libertines exclaims,

> I abhor nature; and I detest her because I know her well.... Her barbarous hand can only nourish evil; evil is her entertainment. Should I love such a mother? No; but I will imitate her, all the while detesting her. I shall copy her, as she wishes, but I shall curse her unceasingly.

Here, as with God in an earlier stage of the dialectic (or in a less enlightened moment of history), the law to be transgressed is identified. But whereas transgression could take Sade beyond God, it could not take him beyond nature, which has, by definition, the capacity to recuperate everything: even "unnatural" acts are done in nature's name, and cannot move it to revolt. "The most wicked individual on earth, the most abominable, the most ferocious, the most barbarous, and the most indefatigable murderer is therefore but the spokesman of her desires, the vehicle of her will, and the surest agent of her caprices." Thus nature herself is something of the perpetual motion machine that Sade urged the Revolution to become.

The result is not comforting. There is no way to go beyond nature, rant and murder as one will; there is no transcendent principle to be found, not even in the depths of crime. The anguished revolt of the Sadean libertine against a rigorously material universe that finally offers nothing except its own materiality to revolt against is endlessly, repetitively staged: more horrors that get nowhere, more cries of raging pleasure, in a kind of orchestrated monotony, though one relieved by a certain metaphysical wit. ("'Oh! What an enigma is man!' 'Yes, my friend,' said Curval. 'That is why a certain very intelligent gentleman once said it was better to fuck him than to understand him.'") Here and elsewhere, perhaps especially in the perverse pedagogy of *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, Sade twists the Enlightenment in ways that make its humanism appear too limited to account for the experience lying in wait for humanity.

PETER BROOKS is chairman of the department of comparative literature at Yale University and is writing a book on narrative and the body.

Heart and Soil

BY ROGER ROSENBLATT

Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit by Al Gore

(Houghton Mifflin, 407 pp., $22.95)

Senator Al Gore is a rare bird among politicians not only because he is interested in the survival of rare birds, but because he is concerned with the grimy particulars of process, unabashedly shows a religious streak, and is devoted to an issue that makes nightmares for campaign managers. The issue is "the environment," the mere sound of which inspires most voters to frenzies of nodding and yawning. Gore knows this from his experience as a presidential candidate in 1988; he was once derided by an opponent for sounding "as if I was running for national scientist." No matter. He has studied his subject. And the case he makes for environmental reform in this elegant book is persuasive.

I confess that I, too, usually wish for the threatened earth to open up and swallow me whenever someone starts in on the greenhouse effect or the ozone layer or chlorofluorocarbons. But Gore's book, which is politely addressed to dullards like myself, awakens converts, or at least it fills the indifferent with anxiety. The specific recommendations that he offers, his "global Marshall Plan," are clear, sensible, and, for the most part, they seem to this non-scientist to lie within the world's reach. Among his suggestions for achieving ecological balance are: tax incentives for technologies that improve the environment; building world training centers for environmental technicians; a redefining of gross national product to include the ecological costs of growth; and various regulations, in such areas as automobile manufacture, to keep bad air from turning worse.

Gore's overall idea of linking environmental concerns to economic choices is both interesting in itself and goes counter to current American policy, which fairly ignores the environment as an economic matter. As he observes, "Anything that economists wish to forget about is called an externality and then banished from serious thought." What he urges is for us to begin placing the environment at the center of our economic planning. If businesses were taxed for the pollution they dumped into the atmosphere, there would be less pollution. Common sense; but he goes further. As things stand, says Gore, "we tax work and we subsidize the depletion of natural resources." What, he asks, if we lowered the tax on work and raised it for the polluters? That would not only help our natural resources, it would also affect our rising unemployment. Tax revenues would remain the same, more people would be working, and the country would be cleaner and safer.

Occasionally, though, Gore steps toward the deep end: one of his proposals is to have teachers and schoolchildren in different countries monitor the Earth on a daily basis to measure water and air pollution. Given the state of American education, however, most teachers would be delighted simply to monitor their own classrooms. Still, the unusual strength of Gore's book lies in the kind of thinking that it exemplifies.

Such thinking is not merely senatorial. Gore's mind stretches far beyond matters of policy, which is appropriate to the subject: it is hard to reflect for long on the future of the planet without coming to reflect on ultimate questions. And so Gore states plainly that for people to appreciate fully the dangers of the environmental situation, they need finally to establish a spiritual state of mind. The

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spiritual, of course, is slippery ground for politicians. Usually those who say "spiritual" are selling bigotry, or themselves, or both. It is refreshing, for this reason, to hear a politician broach these matters in a mood of sympathy, tolerance, and intellectual curiosity.

In his introduction, Gore writes:

> I have ... come to believe that the world's ecological balance depends on more than just our ability to restore a balance between civilization's ravenous appetite for resources and the fragile equilibrium of the earth's environment; it depends on more, even, than our ability to restore a balance between ourselves as individuals and the civilization we aspire to create and sustain. In the end, we must restore a balance within ourselves between who we are and what we are doing.

And in the book's riskiest chapter, called "Environmentalism of the Spirit," he puts the matter more boldly still:

> We routinely choose to indulge our own generation at the expense of all who will follow. We enshrine the self as the unit of ethical account, separate and distinct not just from the natural world but even from a sense of obligation to others—not just others in future generations, but increasingly even to others in the same generation; and not just those in distant lands, but increasingly even in our own communities. We do this not because we don't care but because we don't really live in our lives.

What Gore means by saying that we do not live in our own lives is, I believe, that we have lost a sense of privacy. He relates such a sense to the needs, the perils, and the beauties of the natural world; but the ideal of lost privacy suggests a more general complaint about modern life as a whole. To live one's own life is to go counter to the conspicuous introspection that passes for genuine feeling nowadays. It is the antithesis of encounter groups and grievance groups and men sitting in circles baying like hounds. It is to live really inwardly, that is, in the troubled, unsure, ambiguous, quiet places.

Unconnected to ourselves, says Gore, we have lost our connection with the natural world. I remember a couple of years ago French farmers staged a protest demonstration by laying out slabs of wheat fields in the middle of the Champs-Elysées. The effect on the city was immediate and astonishing: citizens, including policemen who were there to keep fights from breaking out, began romping in the sudden fields, as if they had never been touched by the countryside before. Gore appeals to this buried affection for nature. There is, I have to admit, a New Age quality to his book, and there are passages at which I slightly cringed; but most of his thinking does not melt into air. Quite the contrary, it is grounded in something solid, if invisible.

He certainly goes all out: this is not a book by a politician who worries about a paper trail. Most of those who write on the environment tend to stay clear of mentioning God or formal religion, probably because they consider environmentalism a kind of religion in itself. Gore does not. He writes about God's designs and dominion over the natural world from the viewpoint of a traditional believer; and his quotations from the Bible leave one with the impression that he is devoted to it outside the purposes of research for his book. When he says that the land and the seas as sacred, he means sacred. Whether or not you like his term "spiritual triangulation" (I don't), the idea of recognizing and celebrating an alliance among God, human beings, and nature has a nice, old-fashioned daring.

This impressive book is not the work of somebody who is running for something. As I say, in the matter of the environment, and in higher matters as well, Gore is a believer. And *Earth in the Balance* is a plea for moral responsibility made by someone who understands both words in his bones. Good bones.

ROGER ROSENBLATT's new book, *Life Itself: Abortion in the American Mind*, will be published by Random House next month.

TRB *continued from page 6*

and rock concerts get no government subsidy. Why should the customers of these entertainments help to finance the entertainments of those who are, on average, better heeled than themselves?

And the preening self-righteousness of the arts crowd can get on your nerves, as they insist on this subsidy as a kind of right. There is something irksome about people wanting to be a counterculture on the majority's nickel.

On the other hand, the unavoidable fact is that much if not most of the art we treasure from past centuries—paintings, cathedrals, most classical music, even some of Shakespeare's plays—was created under government (or official church) sponsorship. If our democratic society is going to produce similar gifts for future generations—not to mention our own—we probably need some institutional substitute for the commissioning function of kings and cardinals. The NEA is it.

Furthermore, there is no way to subsidize the creation of new art (as opposed to merely helping the New York Philharmonic to perform Beethoven's Ninth Symphony again) without subsidizing art that gives offense to someone. Senator Jesse Helms and the Rev. Donald Wildmon are always going to find something to make a fuss about.

The latest fuss is typical, in that the actual connection between the offensive material and the NEA is indirect. The fuss concerns a single passage in a single poem in a single publication of a group that received a whopping $5,000 NEA grant for general purposes. To expect the NEA to inspect and warrant the purity of every product of a grantee is absurd. To expect politicians to show a bit of backbone when these fusses are raised is not absurd, but if the politicians aren't up to that, we might as well forget the whole exercise.

Supporters of arts subsidies often make the mistake of defending any item a Helms or a Wildmon attacks. That is foolish. Not only is it inevitable that an arts agency will subsidize works that are offensive to a minority. It is inevitable that the agency will sometimes find itself subsidizing works that are rightly offensive to the majority of people—on moral grounds or on political grounds or simply as bad art. Arts funding is not a science. If the majority itself isn't prepared to shrug off a few genuine mistakes every year, then it isn't ready to be in the arts subsidy business.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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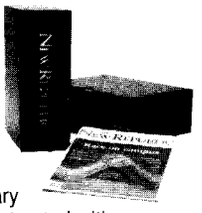

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HOUSTON DIARIST

Monster pansies

THERE ARE TWO PANSY SEASONS IN Houston; it is excessively hot for much action from June to September, but in spring and fall (there is no winter here, just tropical downpours and an occasional, anomalous freeze), signs appear advertising Monster Pansies. And they are set out, in all the colors of hybridization, to be wondered at, monstrously. The other horticultural phenomenon of note is the craze for Instant Topiary. Every nursery displays a procession, out front, of spread eagles, rearing pegasuses, dancing bears made of chicken wire and sphagnum moss, over which the swiftest ivy has been trained to creep and envelop. Not since the vogue of the player piano has there been an American device so emblematic of our crying need to substitute for authentic skill and traditional decorum a sensational (if unconvincing) ersatz—no replacement, of course, but a recognizable proxy, a colorized facsimile.

IT IS THE FOURTH SEMESTER I have been living here, teaching at the University of Houston and discovering what the capital of the Third Coast (Galveston is our Piraeus) shares with Los Angeles and Manhattan: horrific crimes of violence, apparently insuperable economic etiolation, and immense complacency. But Texans are affable, wealthy Texans (very visible here) even more so, and it is easy—if you are a university professor and never drive outside the Loop except to reach the airport twice a year—to pretend you are in Eden. Of course, Eden doesn't assign its younger, hunkier policemen to serve as decoys for gay-bashers (Monster Pansies indeed—how I long to have attended those briefing sessions!), but after thirty years in Greenwich Village I relish the illusory sense of freedom here, day or night, on the streets, in the parks, circulating or just sitting there, even if such (false) security has been purchased by such disguises.

IF NOT EDEN, LOTUS-LAND: SO much sunshine makes a minor mockery of even the most determined slums. I breeze through what resembles the less respectable shantytowns of Johannesburg on my way to classes, yet in the winter no one freezes, no rag-wrapped bodies lie on subway grilles over which I pick my way in Manhattan, in Washington. There is no subway, and mass transit—much discussed in the last mayoral election—is so rudimentary that there is little mixing of class and race from neighborhood to neighborhood except in the Montrose, our one interstitial vicinity. The muggers operate from cars, giving crime its bad bourgeois name.

BUT IF VIOLENCE IS ENDEMIC, whatever its class roots, to all American cities, more characteristic of Houston this year is the speculative construction in modest residential neighborhoods—the Heights, for example, where a dozen neo-Victorian "painted ladies" have just fastidiously appeared, selling for a third of a million each. Surrounded—at a few yards' distance—by '30s frame bungalows like the one I live in across from the Menil Collection, these grand new vacant ventures emphasize the polarization that everywhere rives our society. Like the amazing and often tenantless cluster of pylons downtown that some call Oz, these recent erections will probably weather into their neighborhood uninhabited: built to launder drug money, or to write off taxes, or to work out an S&L deal, they seem more sinister and sadder, even, than the cruddy cabins past which my rented Camry takes me to school.

'AFFABLE' IS NOT ADEQUATE: CAN there be another American city that in the last ruinous lustrum has blown itself to an opera house *and* a museum *and* a concert-hall complex? Of course it is wrong to speak of "the city" as affording itself such cultural lagniappe: Houston spends virtually no municipal money on culture. This decor is entirely funded by private foundations under the interlocking directorates of precisely the uneasy affables I so admire. Of course these people and their advisers are made nervous by the consistent shelling-out required by such elitist projects as Da Camera, Sergiu Luca's chamber music society, one of the most distinguished in the country but an enterprise unable to attract a large and paying audience. Private foundations are notoriously leery these days of *continuous* support (the kind chamber music requires in a democratic society). Shouldn't we try, the patrons ask each other with a certain petulance, a certain impatience with the limits of distinction—shouldn't we try another tack, something more ... more multicultural? Anyway, something less austere than the Second Viennese School?

AND THE CITY ITSELF IS SLOW TO capitalize, if that is the term, on its brilliant features. (A couple of years ago, when the White House team was scrutinizing Houston as a likely site for an economic summit conference, three visits of inspection were made before someone on Bush's staff was *obliged* to ask, "By the way, do you have a museum here?") Yet the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, the Alley Theater, and the Houston Symphony Orchestra (Eschenbach) have been upgraded, or perhaps the reverse, by the whopping new Wortham, which has two auditoriums seating over a thousand and serving the Houston Grand Opera and the Houston Ballet (both of which used to crowd into Jones Hall with the orchestra); the Menil Collection is the most serenely elitist gift that enlightened philanthropy ever bestowed on the fine-arts aspirations of an American city; and the new Alice Pratt Brown concert center over at Rice University (Houston's Harvard to Houston's Tufts, the University of Houston) is scaled to such overpowering dimensions and neo-Fascist decor that when an opening chamber-music recital had not started by 9:15, someone behind me observed, "One thing you had to say for Mussolini, he made the concerts begin on time."

ALL SECURITY IS FALSE, CERTAINLY. In Candlelight Plaza, a newish middle-income development just within the Loop, there were, this past year, thirty-two driveway muggings. No one walks anywhere after dark without expecting consequences. Last term two of my students were mugged on just such promenades, and unless you lock yourself into your car, the return from occasions housed by those splendid halls just listed is a jittery business. Yet the temper of the town is mild, without rancor. The bayous have been drained, the suburbs are guarded by their heraldic fake topiary, and we are waiting for the barbarians: After a Human Rights Awards Ceremony last December (held at the Rothko Chapel on the Menil Collection grounds—most of us under a tent embellished with monster pansies), once we had been adjured by Nelson Mandela and Governor Richards and Jimmy Carter that World Peace begins with our neighbor, one of the grandest of the affables was heard to remark to her husband, "I really must try to be nicer to Barbara."

RICHARD HOWARD

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Rethinking Public Education in America

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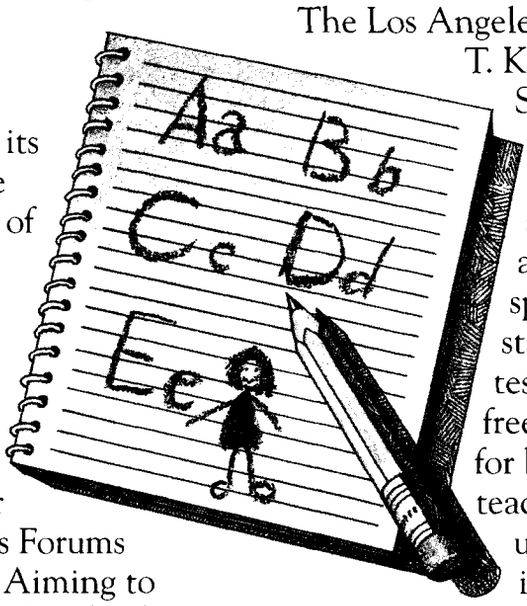

Each forum featured a leading proponent of educational reform as its keynote speaker. In San Francisco, it was William J. Bennett, formerly U.S. Secretary of Education and now a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute. The Los Angeles forum featured David T. Kearns, Deputy U.S. Secretary of Education.

Among the proposed reforms: year-around school attendance; more specialized schools; standardized achievement tests and curricula; and freedom of school choice for both parents and teachers. The speakers also urged greater business involvement in public education.

It's our hope that these ideas will contribute to a growing consensus on educational reform in the U.S.

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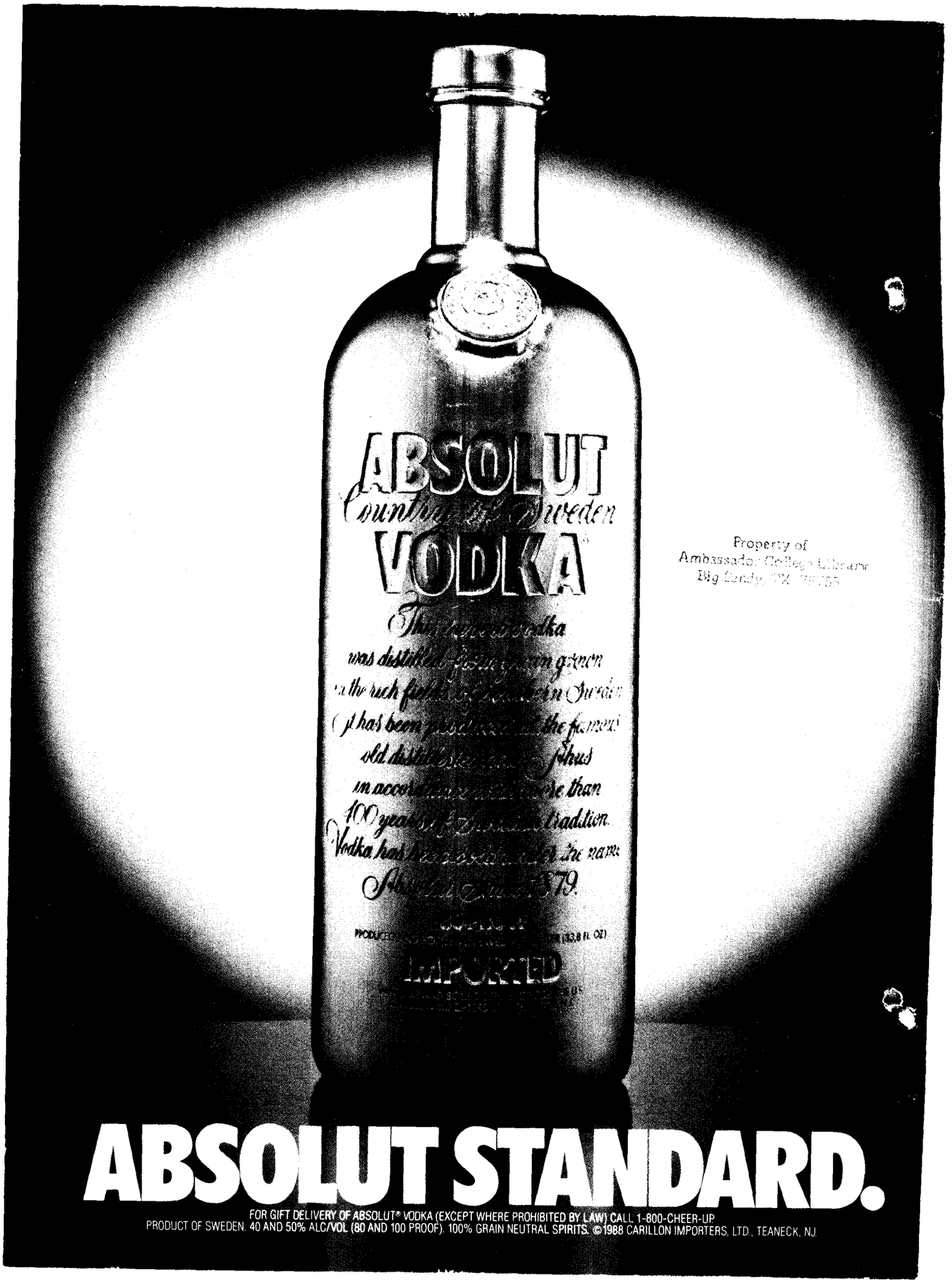

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